

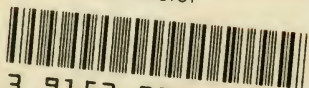


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## LEO TOLSTOY

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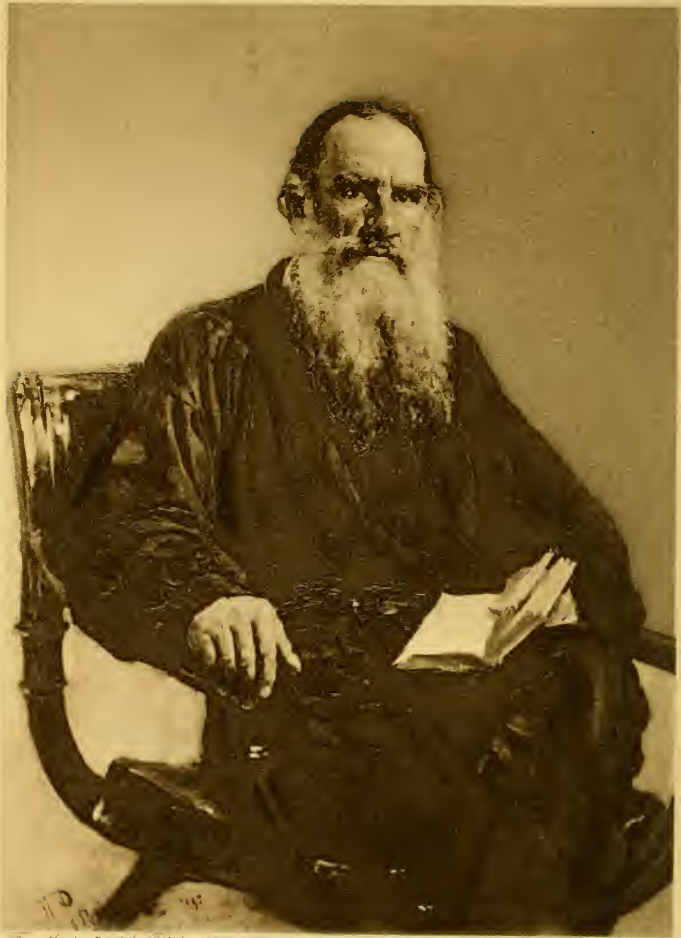
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From the portrait by Repin, 1887.

Leo Tolstoy

Leo Tolstoy,

# LEO TOLSTOY

BY

AYLMER MAUDE

WITH SEVEN ILLUSTRATIONS

NEW YORK  
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## PREFACE

**A**T the age of five, Tolstoy's imagination was fired by his brother telling him of a green stick, buried at the edge of a ravine, on which was written the secret which would make all men happy and enable them to live in loving harmony with one another, free from pain, sorrow, anger or distress. Tolstoy's life—especially the last thirty years of it—was devoted to the discovery of that magic message, and to communicating what he could decipher of it to mankind. To discover it was not enough; he would not rest till he had proclaimed it from the housetops.

Convinced that the existing order was corrupt and iniquitous, he addressed himself to its destruction. Rejecting the stereotyped laudation of 'Tsar, Faith and Fatherland,' he attacked first the Church, then Patriotism, and finally the Tsar and the Tsardom itself, till he had shown how rotten the established order was, both in Church and State.

The success of his attacks exceeded anything that appeared possible to his contemporaries. The ideas he popularized in *Ivan the Fool*, *The Imp and the Crust* and in *Too Dear* became current everywhere. He thus helped to prepare the Revolution, not by advocating the

opinions or the conduct of those who accomplished it, but by dissolving all belief in the justice or efficacy of the existing order and thus clearing the path for catastrophic changes. For an instance of a beneficent change of mind produced by, or accompanying, his propaganda, consider how confirmed the Russian people were in the vodka habit in 1886, when Tolstoy began to denounce the evils of drink, first in *The Imp and the Crust* (dramatized in *The First Distiller*) and then in a series of *Essays* and in another play. Then consider how readily that same people accepted the abolition of the vodka trade in 1914; it is an illustration of Tolstoy's thesis (in *What is Art?*) that art—in his case literary art—is of supreme social importance because 'it lays in the souls of men the rails along which in real life their actions will naturally pass.'

When Tolstoy denounced private property in land, few people imagined that an institution so rooted in history and apparently so durable would be overthrown in Russia within a generation.

From the dawn of history nation had risen up against nation until men had come to believe that the human race cannot do without periodic paroxysms of international slaughter. But Tolstoy, voicing the feeling of many peasant sects and responding to something very deeply seated in the human heart, declared that war is murder, that the way to end it is for each man to stop fighting, and that a perception of that fact by the mass of men would compel rulers to arrange the world's affairs without warfare. If some consideration for that view is now forcing its way into practical



politics and people are seriously aiming at a super-national authority, or a League of Nations to secure peace, no one (even though he disapprove of Tolstoy's utterance) can reasonably deny that the great Russian idealist was a potent factor in producing this result, and by so doing may have profoundly influenced future history.

A Life of such a man, and a sketch of his views and works, if written either as a panegyric or as an attack, could only confuse that search for truth of which Tolstoy himself set so noble an example. Therefore I have tried faithfully to discriminate between the gold and the dross in his teaching.

Readers who have disagreed with him have generally been inclined to underrate his influence and to assume that it could be safely ignored, while those who have appreciated his potency, importance and sincerity have nearly always been too ready to assume that all his conclusions are sound and wholesome. To do justice to the interest and vitality of his views, to appreciate the efficiency of his presentation of them and the admirable use he makes of literary art in rendering them attractive, is not enough; one has also to be careful to verify his conclusions before accepting them. This is no easy task, but it has been my chief aim as an author.

Whether I have succeeded or failed, I am sure, at any rate, that the task is an important one, for Tolstoy's condemnation of the very foundations of civilized life and of all established government must be effectively met, or a growing spirit of anarchy, challenging, indict-

ing and disparaging every effort to secure any definiteness in human relations or to establish any fixed law, will undermine the bases of all our social efforts, and sooner or later the whole structure will crash down as it has done in Russia. Merely to deny or deride Tolstoy's opinions will not do. His themes are too important, his statement of them is too masterly, and his sincerity is too apparent.

His search for truth concerning the great problems of Life, Death and Religion will always remain attractive, but to-day there is a special interest in tracing the immediate effect of his words on current history.

\* \* \* \* \*

My best thanks are due to Miss Nancy Thomas for the valuable assistance she has rendered me in condensing and arranging the contents of this work. My son Arnold Maude has also contributed a number of very useful suggestions.

AYLMER MAUDE

37 NORFOLK STREET  
STRAND, LONDON, W.C.2  
15th May 1918

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# LEO TOLSTOY

## CHAPTER I

### EARLY YEARS

**T**HE Tolstoy family are related to several of the principal Russian families. The first Count Tolstoy served Peter the Great as ambassador at the Sublime Porte, and earned his title as a reward for the questionable service of luring back the Tsarevich Alexis from Italy to Russia, where he was put to death. The grandson of that Count Peter Tolstoy was great-grandfather to Count Leo Tolstoy.

Leo's maternal grandfather was a Prince Volkonsky who, having attained the high post of Commander-in-Chief, suddenly lost it by refusing to marry the niece and mistress of Potemkin, the most powerful of Catherine the Great's favourites.

Nicholas Tolstoy, Leo's father, was not yet seventeen when Napoleon invaded Russia in 1812, but he entered the army, was taken prisoner in Germany and was sent to Paris. When the war was over he left the army, and a few years later inherited from his father an estate so encumbered that he declined to accept it, and found himself faced by the task of providing for his mother, a woman accustomed to great luxury. Under these circumstances a marriage was arranged for him with

the wealthy, but plain, Princess Mary Volkonsky, who was some years his senior.

She was well educated, musical, spoke five languages and had a gift for improvising delightful tales. It is said that at balls her young lady friends would readily leave the dance and gather in a dark room to hear her tell stories, which from shyness she would only do where she could not be seen.

Five children were born to Nicholas and Marie Tolstoy. First, four sons, of whom Leo, born on 28th August 1828,<sup>1</sup> was the youngest. His name in Russian is Lyof Nikolayevich (Leo son-of-Nicholas) Tolstoy. Leo Tolstoy (with a y) is the way he signed himself when he used the Latin alphabet. When pronouncing the name it should be remembered that the accent falls on the second syllable, which rhymes with 'boy.'

A year and a half after his birth, a daughter, Mary, was born; and in giving birth to her the mother died.

Though he could not remember his mother, Tolstoy tells us, 'she appeared to me as a creature so elevated, pure and spiritual that often in the middle period of my life, during my struggles with overwhelming temptations, I prayed to her soul, begging her to aid me, and such prayer always helped me much.'

Yasnaya Polyana (Bright Glade), the estate on which Tolstoy was born and where he lived most of his life, is situated in pleasantly undulating country 10 miles south of Tula and about 130 miles south of Moscow. It is well wooded and has many avenues of lime and birch trees. Some of the great confidence in himself which characterized Tolstoy may have been due to the

<sup>1</sup> Unless otherwise stated, the dates given are in the old Russian style. Up to March 1900 this was twelve, and since then thirteen, days behind our calendar.



fact that he grew up on an estate where for generations his ancestors had been the only people of importance.

A great influence was exercised on the growing boy by 'Aunty' Tatiana; of whom he tells us that 'she must have been very attractive with her enormous plait of crisp curly hair, her jet-black eyes and vivacious energetic expression. When I remember her she was more than forty and I never thought about her as pretty or not pretty. I simply loved her eyes, her smile, and her dusky broad little hand, with its energetic little cross veins.

'We had two aunts and a grandmother; they all had more right to us than Tatiana Alexandrovna, whom we called Aunt only by habit (for our kinship was so distant that I could never remember what it was), but she took the first place in our upbringing by right of love of us (like Buddha in the story of the wounded swan) and we felt her right. From early childhood she taught me the spiritual delight of love. She did not teach this by words, but by her whole being she filled me with love. I saw, I felt, how she enjoyed loving, and I understood the joy of love.'

She had been left an orphan without means, and had been brought up by Tolstoy's paternal grandparents with their own children. She loved, and was loved by, Count Nicholas, Leo's father, but stood aside that he might marry the rich Princess Marie Volkonsky and repair the family fortunes. Six years after his wife's death Count Nicholas asked Tatiana to marry him and be a mother to his children. Not wishing to spoil her pure ideal relations with the family, she refused the first but fulfilled the second of these requests.

Not less powerful for good was the influence of his eldest brother, Nicholas, of whom Leo Tolstoy says :

' It was he who, when I was five and my brothers Dmitry six and Sergey seven, announced to us that he possessed a secret by means of which, when disclosed, all men would become happy : there would be no more disease, no trouble, no one would be angry with anybody, all would love one another, and all would become " Ant-Brothers." . . . We even organized a game of Ant-Brothers, which consisted in sitting under chairs, sheltering ourselves with boxes, screening ourselves with shawls and cuddling against one another while thus crouching in the dark. . . . The Ant-Brotherhood was revealed to us, but not the chief secret : the way for all men to cease suffering any misfortune, to leave off quarrelling and being angry, and to become continuously happy : this secret Nicholas said he had written on a green stick buried by the road at the edge of a certain ravine, at which spot (since my body must be buried somewhere) I have asked to be buried in memory of Nikolenka. . . . Nicholas had probably read or heard of the Freemasons—of their aspirations towards the happiness of mankind, and of the mysterious initiatory rites on entering their order ; he had also probably heard about the Moravian Brothers.' (In Russian *ant* is *muravey*.)

Writing when he was over seventy, Tolstoy added :

' The ideal of Ant-Brothers lovingly clinging to one another, though not under two arm-chairs curtained by shawls, but of all mankind under the wide dome of heaven, has remained the same for me. As I then believed that there existed a little green stick whereon was written the message which could destroy all evil in men and give them universal welfare, so I now believe that such truth exists and will be revealed to men and will give them all its promises.'

We have here the key-note of Tolstoy's lifelong

aspirations. Obstacles in his own character and in his external circumstances often obscured its manifestation, but in spite of all failings and errors the motive was always there and its influence strengthened with the passing years.

We must think of Tolstoy in his early boyhood at Yasnaya Polyana as interested in his father's dogs and horses and hunting, as well as in games of all kinds.

In spite of his sensitive introspective nature his childhood was a very happy one. He speaks of 'that splendid, innocent, joyful, poetic period of childhood up to fourteen,' and tells us that 'the impressions of early childhood, preserved in one's memory, grow in some unfathomable depth of the soul like seeds thrown on good ground, till after many years they thrust their bright green shoots into God's world.'

When he was eight, the family moved to Moscow for his elder brothers' education; and the following summer his father died.

Many stories told of the young Leo illustrate his impulsive, imaginative, strenuous, and rather erratic, nature.

When he was about seven or eight he had an ardent desire to fly, and persuaded himself that it was possible to do so. It was only necessary to sit down tight on your heels, clasping your arms firmly around your knees, and the tighter you held them the higher you would fly. Being always ardent to put his beliefs into practice, he one day climbed out on to the window-sill (about eighteen feet from the ground) and threw himself out. He was picked up unconscious. The results of his fall were, however, fortunately confined to a slight concussion of the brain, and after sleeping for eighteen hours on end he awoke none the worse for his venture.

His story, *Childhood*, is not at all strictly autobiographical, but it contains many passages known to be true of himself, and one such is that in which he says: 'I knew very well that I was plain, and therefore every reference to my appearance was painfully offensive to me. . . . Moments of despair frequently came over me: I imagined that there could be no happiness on earth for a man with so broad a nose, such thick lips, and such small grey eyes as mine. I asked God to perform a miracle and change me into a handsome boy, and all I then had and all I could ever possess in the future I would have given for a handsome face.'

When quite small he conceived an attachment for the nine-year-old daughter of a friend of his father's, and, being jealous when she dared to talk to others, he angrily pushed her off a balcony, with the result that she limped for a long time afterwards. More than a quarter of a century later he married her daughter! While still quite small he learnt to ride, and he became an expert horseman. Riding was, till the very end of his life, a favourite exercise of his.

When he was thirteen his elder brothers entered the University of Kazan, and with them he went to live in that city, with an aunt whose house was the centre of much hospitality and gaiety.

Before he was sixteen, following in his brothers' footsteps, he entered the University, which was a place not likely to inspire its students with much enthusiasm for knowledge. Tolstoy was extremely good at French and German, but did not work regularly.

The winter season, when after joining the University he entered Kazan society, was a particularly gay one. He attended many balls given by the Governor of the



Province and by private people, as well as masquerades, concerts, tableaux-vivants and private theatricals. He was long remembered by old inhabitants as having been present at all the balls, soirées and aristocratic parties, a welcome guest everywhere and always dancing, though, far from being a ladies' man, he was distinguished by a strange awkwardness and shyness.

Perhaps as a result of his social surroundings, he failed in his examinations at the end of his first year, and changed over from the Faculty of Oriental Languages to that of Law.

In those days he was very careful of his personal appearance, his clothes indicating his aristocratic pretensions. But though externally he differed from the Tolstoy of after years, his conversation often ran on much the same lines as in later life, and was uttered with that intensity of conviction and those flashes of sardonic humour which subsequently made even his most didactic writing entertaining.

A fellow-pupil who has recorded his impressions of Tolstoy says: 'I kept clear of the Count, who from our first meeting repelled me by his assumption of coldness, his bristly hair, and the piercing expression of his half-closed eyes. I had never met a young man with such a strange, and to me incomprehensible, air of importance and self-satisfaction. . . . At first I seldom met the Count, who in spite of his awkwardness and bashfulness had joined the small group of so-called "aristocrats." He hardly replied to my greetings, as if wishing to intimate that even here, in the University, we were far from being equals, since he drove up with a fast trotter and I came on foot. . . .'

It happened that this pupil and Tolstoy were once

both late for a lecture on History, and were incarcerated together by order of the Inspector.

In their place of confinement, Tolstoy's indictment fell upon the University and on University teaching in general. The phrase, 'The Temple of Science,' was frequently repeated. Remaining perfectly serious himself, he portrayed the professors in such a comical light that his companion records, 'In spite of all my efforts to appear indifferent, I laughed like one possessed.'

'Yet,' said Tolstoy, 'we both had a right to expect that we should leave this Temple useful men, equipped with knowledge. But what shall we really carry away from the University? . . . What shall we be good for, and to whom shall we be necessary?'

In May 1847, when his brother Sergey had finished his studies, Leo Tolstoy (not yet nineteen) left Kazan without completing the course or taking his degree. His failure at the University was a source of great annoyance and disappointment to him, and on returning to Yasnaya Polyana he drew up a tremendous list of subjects he intended to study. He was always forming good resolutions and writing them down, but they were never carried out fully, and often not at all.

His intention was to live with his dear Aunt Tatiana; to 'perfect' himself, to study, to manage his estate, and to improve the condition of the serfs. The last part of his programme was not at that time destined to have much success, and some years later, in *A Squire's Morning*, he depicted the difficulties that baffled him.

From the time he was at the University he intermittently kept a Diary in which he recorded all his misdeeds, especially any offence against the Seventh Commandment, in order that he might repent and if



TOLSTOY IN 1843





possible refrain for the future ; and this record shows how full he was at this time of strenuous resolutions.

During the last year of his life in Kazan he had made close friends with a student named Dyakov, under whose influence he developed 'an ecstatic worship of the ideal of virtue, and the conviction that it is man's destiny continually to perfect himself. To put all mankind right and to destroy all human vices and misfortunes appeared a matter that could well be accomplished. It seemed quite easy and simple to put oneself right, to acquire all the virtues, and to be happy.'

As to his religious opinions he tells us :

'I was baptized and brought up in the Christian Orthodox faith. I was taught it in my childhood and all through my boyhood and youth. But before I left the University, in my second year, at the age of eighteen, I no longer believed anything I had been taught.' (*Confession.*)

His Diary nevertheless shows that he prayed earnestly and frequently ; the explanation being that his opinions were wavering and immature, and that though intellectually he discarded the Orthodox Russo-Greek Church, yet in times of trouble or distress he instinctively appealed to God for help.

Among the things he read which greatly influenced him at this period were :

The Sermon on the Mount, from St. Matthew's Gospel.

Rousseau's *Confessions* and *Emile* ; and

Dickens' *David Copperfield*. (He always attached great importance to the *kindliness* of Dickens' outlook on life, as well as to his humour.)

Most important of all was the influence of Rousseau, of whom Tolstoy says : ' I read the whole of Rousseau.

I was more than enthusiastic about him, I worshipped him. At the age of fifteen I wore a medallion portrait of him next my body, instead of the Orthodox cross. Many of his pages are so akin to me that it seems to me I must have written them myself.'

After some months at Yasnaya we find him in Petrograd (Petersburg as it then was) entering for examinations at the University, and writing to his brother that he intended to remain there 'for ever.' He successfully passed two examinations in Law, but altered his mind and wished to enter the Horse Guards as a Cadet, and to see active service with the army. Russia was then (1849) dispatching to assist Austria in suppressing the Hungarian rebellion. But he tells us that 'Spring came and the charm of country life again drew me back to my estate.'

In later years, when Tolstoy's reputation was world-wide, critics amused themselves by detecting inconsistencies in his conduct and by questioning his sincerity. But the proof of his sincerity is writ large in the story of his life. Time after time we find him vehemently resolving never more to do certain things but always to do other things, and again and again confessing in great tribulation that he had failed to carry out his intentions; yet in spite of everything he returned again and again to his earliest ideals and gradually shaped his life into accord with them, eventually forming habits which when he first extolled them appeared utterly beyond his reach. Not insincerity but impetuosity, retrieved by extraordinary tenacity of purpose, always characterized him. It was the same with his thirst for knowledge as with his yet deeper thirst after righteousness. Often as he was swayed by the lures of life, each of those two great desires found satisfaction at last.

From Petersburg he brought back with him to Yasnaya a gifted but drunken German musician named Rudolph, whose acquaintance he had chanced to make and whose talent he discerned. For some time Tolstoy devoted himself passionately to music; and he succeeded in acquiring sufficient skill to become an excellent and sympathetic accompanist on the piano.

For the next three years he lived partly at Yasnaya and partly in Moscow, leading a life alternating between asceticism and self-indulgence. These were among the wildest and most wasted years of his life; but even here we find him, in the summer of 1850, resuming his Diary with penitence and self-reproach; and drawing up a time-table of how his days are in future to be spent: estate management, bathing, diary-writing, music, dinner, rest, reading, bathing and again estate business to close the day. This curriculum was however neglected. Gusts of passion again and again swept away his good resolutions.

At this time he made his first attempt to start a school for the peasant children of Yasnaya, but it was closed again two years later when, having lost money at cards, he was in pecuniary difficulties.

In relation to women, Tolstoy's ideal was then a regular and affectionate family life. Women were for him divided into two groups: those sacred ones who could be looked on as possible wives or sisters, and those who, like the gipsy singers, could be paid and possessed for short periods. His animal passions were very strong, and late in life he told me that neither drinking, gaming, smoking, nor any other bad habit, had been nearly so hard for him to overcome as his desire for women. But he never doubted that that desire was a bad one, and to judge him fairly it must be remembered that the general tone of the

society in which he lived was very loose. He tells us that even 'the kind aunt with whom I lived, herself the purest of beings, always told me there was nothing she so desired for me as that I should have relations with a married woman: "*Rien ne forme un jeune homme, comme une liaison avec une femme comme-il-faut.*" (Nothing so forms a young man as an intimacy with a woman of good breeding.) Another good fortune she desired for me was that I should become an aide-de-camp, and if possible aide-de-camp to the Emperor. But the greatest happiness of all would be that I should marry a very rich girl and become possessed of as many serfs as possible.'

In March 1849, writing from Moscow to 'Aunty' Tatiana, he says he believes it to be true that spring brings a moral renovation. It always does him good, and he is able to maintain his good intentions for some months. Winter is the season that causes him to go wrong.

This period of his life was brought to a close by the return from the Caucasus, on leave of absence, of his eldest brother Nicholas, who was now an artillery officer. Anxious to economize and to pay off the debts he had contracted at cards, Leo resolved to accompany his brother when the latter returned south. He entrusted his estate to the care of his brother-in-law, who was to pay his debts and allow him only 500 roubles (then equal to about £80) a year to live on; and he gave his word not to play cards any more.

## CHAPTER II

### WAR

#### THE CAUCASUS AND THE CRIMEA

**I**N 1851 the Caucasus was very unsettled. The native tribes, amid their thick forests and strong mountain fastnesses, under their famous leader Shamyl, still maintained their independence despite Russia's efforts to subdue them.

The following entry in Tolstoy's Diary, made soon after he reached the Caucasus, records some of the rapidly changing moods he then experienced :

‘ STARY URT, 11th June 1851

‘ Yesterday I hardly slept all night. Having posted up my Diary, I prayed to God. It is impossible to convey the sweetness of the feeling I experienced during my prayer. . . . I desired something supreme and good ; but what, I cannot express, though I was clearly conscious of what I wanted. I wished to merge into the Universal Being. I asked Him to pardon my crimes ; yet no, I did not ask for that, for I felt that if He had given me this blissful moment, He had pardoned me. I asked, and at the same time felt that I had nothing to ask, and that I cannot and do not know how to ask ; I thanked Him, but not with words or thoughts. I combined in one feeling



both petition and gratitude. Fear quite vanished. I could not have separated any one emotion—faith, hope, or love—from the general feeling. No, this was what I experienced : it was love of God, lofty love, uniting in itself all that is good, excluding all that is bad. How dreadful it was to me to see the trivial and vicious side of life ! I could not understand its having any attraction for me. With a pure heart I asked God to receive me into His bosom ! I did not feel the flesh. . . . But no, the carnal, trivial side again asserted itself, and before an hour had passed I almost consciously heard the call of vice, vanity, and the empty side of life. I knew whence that voice came, knew it had ruined my bliss ! I struggled against it and yielded to it. I fell asleep thinking of fame and of women ; but it was not my fault, I could not help it.’

Again a few days later, after writing down reflections on suffering and death, he concludes :

‘ How strong I seem to myself to be against all that can happen ; how firm in the conviction that one must here expect nothing but death ; yet a moment later I am thinking with pleasure of a saddle I have ordered on which I shall ride dressed in a Cossack cloak, and of how I shall carry on with the Cossack girls ; and I fall into despair because my left moustache is thinner than my right, and for two hours I straighten it out before the looking-glass.’

When he left Yasnaya Polyana he had had no intention of entering the army ; but he distinguished himself as a volunteer in an expedition against the Tatars, and was noticed by the Commander-in-Chief, who advised him to enter the service. This he did ; but, as it was impossible at once to obtain a commission, he had to enter as a cadet. Cadets lived as

juniors among the officers during a probationary period before obtaining a commission.

He had to go to Tiflis to pass an examination, but found he had left certain necessary documents at home at Yasnaya Polyana, and this occasioned considerable delay, which much annoyed him. The same sort of thing happened over and over again during his life, for he was constitutionally incapable of being methodical in such matters.

During the waiting period he settled in a suburb of Tiflis and worked at his first story, *Childhood*. This he sent to Nekrasov, editor of the leading Petersburg monthly, *The Contemporary*, and Nekrasov at once recognized its merits and accepted it.

It was not till Tolstoy had been in the Caucasus nearly a year that he actually entered the army, and another two years passed before he obtained a commission. Much of this time was devoted to hunting, reading and writing, and only a moderate amount to army service.

In February 1852 he took part in an expedition and would have received a St. George's Cross for bravery, but his documents were still not in order, so that he had to forgo the coveted honour. On a second occasion he had the refusal of the same decoration, but let it go to a private soldier, that the latter might thereby become entitled to a pension. He had a third chance of securing this Cross later on, but this time, absorbed in playing chess till late at night, he omitted to go on duty, and the Commander of the Division, noticing his absence, placed him under arrest and cancelled the award which had already been made in his favour.

By the end of 1852, Tolstoy had completed *The Raid: A Volunteer's Story*, and in this, his first war-

tale, occurs a passage which foreshadows the attitude he ultimately made definitely his own. Describing a march through Caucasian scenery to a night attack on a Tatar village, he says :

‘ Nature, beautiful and strong, breathed conciliation.

‘ Can it be that people have not room to live in this beautiful world, under this measureless, starry heaven ? Can feelings of enmity, vengeance, or lust to destroy one’s fellow-beings, retain their hold on man’s soul amid this enchanting Nature ? All that is evil in man’s heart should, one would think, vanish in contact with Nature—this immediate expression of beauty and goodness.’

In *The Raid*, and in another story called *The Wood-Felling*, he describes the kind of warfare in which he was then engaged. (Both these stories are included in the volume *The Cossacks* : Oxford University Press, World’s Classics Series.)

From the start Tolstoy was hampered in his literary work by that incubus of all Russian writers under the Tsars, the Censor. In a letter to his brother Sergey he writes : ‘ *Childhood* was spoilt, and *The Raid* simply ruined by the Censor. All that was good in it has been struck out or mutilated.’ Indeed, when comparing Tolstoy’s literary achievement with that of Western writers, one should make a large allowance for the continual annoyance, delay, mutilation and suppression inflicted on him by that terrible satellite of despotism.

When not on campaign Tolstoy was generally stationed in a Cossack village, where he lived very much the life he describes so vividly in *The Cossacks*.

There he fell in love with a beautiful girl—Mariana—who remained indifferent to his attentions. His courtship failed (as he says of his hero in *The Cossacks*)



because he could not, like a dashing young Cossack, 'steal herds, get drunk on Chikir wine, troll songs, kill people, and when tipsy climb in at her window for a night without thinking who he was or why he existed.'

In his Diary at this time, Tolstoy entered the following reflections concerning the chief faults he was conscious of in himself :

' 1. The passion of gaming is a covetous passion, gradually developing into a passion for strong excitement. Against this passion one can struggle.

' 2. Sensuality is a physical need, a demand of the body excited by imagination. It increases with abstinence and therefore the struggle against it is very difficult. The best way is by labour and occupation.

' 3. Vanity is the passion least harmful to others and most harmful to oneself.'

In another passage, indicating a different phase of consciousness, he writes : ' For some time past repentance for the loss of the best years of life has begun to torment me, and this since I began to feel that I could do something good. . . . There is something in me which compels me to believe that I was not born to be like everybody else.'

Meanwhile his military career was not giving him satisfaction. ' It is not very pleasant,' he says, speaking of a month in which his routine life had been disturbed by some manœuvres, ' to have to march about and fire off cannon ' ; and he adds that he was looking forward to the time when he would again be able to devote himself to ' hunting, writing, reading, and to conversation with Nicholas.'

On the outbreak of war with Turkey in December 1853, Tolstoy writes : ' When shall I come home ? God only knows. For nearly a year I have been

thinking only of how to sheathe my sword, but still cannot manage it. And as I must fight somewhere, I think it will be pleasanter to do so in Turkey than here.'

Not till January 1854 however did the long-expected order arrive allowing him to pass the examination (a pure formality) which entitled him to become an officer.

He then immediately left for home, where he enjoyed a three weeks' stay with his 'Aunt' Tatiana, his brother and a friend.

The Russo-Turkish War had by that time begun in earnest, and, as a result of an application made through his relative, Prince M. D. Gorchakov, who had been a friend of his father's in the Napoleonic wars, Tolstoy received orders to join the Army of the Danube.

It thus fell to his lot, at twenty-five years of age, to take part in a great European war.

Hostilities between Russia and Turkey had begun in 1853, and France and England broke off negotiations with the former Power in March 1854, the very month in which Tolstoy reached Bucharest on his way to join the army.

He was present at the siege of Silistria, where the Russian forces were commanded by Prince M. D. Gorchakov, who was before long to be entrusted with the defence of Sevastopol.

In a letter to his 'aunt,' Tolstoy describes some operations he took part in :

' . . . After dinner the mine was sprung, and nearly 600 guns opened fire on the fort we wished to take; this continued the whole night. It was such a sight and such an emotion as one never forgets. . . .

' We were all there, and as usual on the eve of a battle we all made believe not to think of the morrow more

than of any other day, but we all, I am sure, at bottom, felt our hearts contract a little (and not a little but a great deal) at the thought of the assault. As you know, the time before a fight is the most disagreeable: it is only then that one has time to be afraid, and fear is a most disagreeable feeling. Towards morning the nearer the moment came the more the feeling diminished, and towards three o'clock when we were all expecting to see a shower of rockets let off, which was the signal for the attack, I was so well inclined for it that I should have been much disappointed if any one had come to tell me that the attack was not to take place. And there! Just an hour before the time for the attack, an aide-de-camp comes from the Field-Marshal with orders to raise the siege of Silistria! I can say without fear of error that this news was received by all as a real misfortune.'

The reason for the retirement was the fear that Austria might intervene in the war and that the Russian forces which were operating so far south might be cut off.

The army retired to Bucharest, and there, at an officers' ball, Tolstoy seized an opportunity to beg Gorchakov to have him transferred to where service would be most active. A few months later he was ordered to Sevastopol, where he found the defence already fully organized, and that the garrison, confident of their powers of resistance, had settled down to a dogged contest.

A fortnight after his arrival he wrote to his brother Sergey:

'So much have I learnt, experienced, and felt this year that I positively do not know what to begin to describe. . . . Silistria is now ancient history and we have Sevastopol, of which I suppose you all read

with beating hearts, and where I was four days ago. Well, how can I tell you all I saw there, and where I went, and what I did, and what the prisoners and wounded French and English say, and what heroes our enemies are, especially the English? I will tell all that later at Yasnaya. But now let me give you an idea of the position of affairs in Sevastopol. The town is besieged from one side, the south, where we had no fortifications when the enemy approached it. Now we have on that side more than 500 heavy guns and several lines of earthworks, positively impregnable. I spent a week in the fortress, and to the last day used to lose my way among that labyrinth of batteries, as in a wood. More than three weeks ago the enemy advanced his trenches in one place to within 200 yards, but gets no farther. When he makes the smallest advance he is overwhelmed with a hail-storm of shot and shell.

‘The spirit of the army is beyond all description. In the times of ancient Greece there was not such heroism. Kornilov making the round of the troops, instead of greeting them with, “Good health to you, lads!” says: “If you have to die, lads, will you die?” And the troops shout, “We’ll die, Your Excellency! Hurrah!” And they do not say it for effect. One saw on every face that it was not jest but earnest; and 22,000 men have already fulfilled the promise.’

Amid the turmoil Tolstoy was attracted by a project to publish a cheap newspaper for the soldiers, but this was vetoed by the Emperor. Tolstoy’s instinct for authorship found vent however in his sketches of *Sevastopol*, two out of the three of which were actually written during the siege.

To his brother he wrote: ‘I, thank God, am well and



live happily and pleasantly since I returned from Turkey. Beyond the frontier—I was ill, poor, and lonely. This side of the frontier—I am well and have good friends, though I am still poor : money simply runs away.'

In another letter he wrote : 'From Kishinev I petitioned to be sent to the Crimea, partly to see this war, and partly to break away from Serzhputovsky's staff, which I did not like ; but most of all from patriotism, of which at that time I confess I had a bad attack. I did not ask for any special appointment, but left it to those in authority to dispose of my fate. In the Crimea I was appointed to a battery in Sevastopol itself, where I passed a month very pleasantly amid simple good companions, who are especially good in time of real war and danger. In December our battery was removed to Simferopol, and there I spent six weeks in a squire's comfortable house, riding into Simferopol to dance and play the piano with young ladies, and hunting wild goats on the Chatyrdag in company with officials. In January there was a fresh shuffling of officers, and I was removed to a battery encamped on the banks of the Belbek, seven miles from Sevastopol. There I got into hot water : the nastiest set of officers in the battery ; a Commander who, though good-hearted, was violent and coarse ; no comforts, and it was cold in the earth huts. Not a single book, nor a single man with whom one could talk ; and there I received from home Rs. 1500 (= about £180 at that time) for the newspaper—sanction for which had already been refused ; and there I lost Rs. 2500, and thereby proved to all the world that I am still an empty fellow, and though the previous circumstances may be taken into account in mitigation, the case is still a very very bad one. In March it

became warmer, and a good fellow, an excellent man, Brenevsky, joined the battery. I began to recover myself, and on 1st April, at the very time of the bombardment, the battery was moved to Sevastopol and I quite recovered myself. There, till 15th May, I was in serious danger, *i.e.*, for four days at a time, at intervals of eight days, I was in charge of a battery in the Fourth Bastion; but it was spring and the weather was excellent, there was an abundance of impressions and of people, all the comforts of life, and we formed a capital circle of well-bred fellows, so that those six weeks will remain among my pleasantest recollections. On 15th May Gorchakov, or the Commander of the Artillery, took it into his head to entrust me with the formation and command of a mountain platoon at Belbek, 14 miles from Sevastopol, with which arrangement I am till now extremely well satisfied in many respects.'

The transfer of Tolstoy from Sevastopol to Belbek was not, as he supposed when he wrote this letter, a whim of his Commander's but a result of his having written *Sevastopol in December*. The article had been read by the Emperor, and had caused him to give instructions to 'take care of the life of that young man.'

The Fourth Bastion, referred to above, was the one English writers call the 'Flagstaff Bastion.' It formed the southernmost point of the fortifications, and was exposed to the fiercest fire.

It was due to Tolstoy's own choice that he had been exposed to the rough and dangerous life of the bastion, for Prince Gorchakov, at whose house he was a frequent visitor, offered him an appointment on his staff. This offer—though it was one which he would eagerly have accepted a few months earlier when he

was serving before Silistria—Tolstoy declined, having come to the conclusion, subsequently expressed in his writings, that the influence exercised by the staff on the conduct of a war is always pernicious ! This opinion not only influenced his conduct and expressed itself in his novels, but fitted into a general view of life he ultimately arrived at—a view the consequences of which we must deal with later.

For the moment let it suffice to mention that whereas he shows a keen appreciation of Admiral Kornilov's achievement in rousing the spirit of the garrison, he nowhere praises the achievement of the great engineer, Todleben, in organizing the defence of the town and improvising that 'labyrinth of batteries' in which Tolstoy used constantly to lose his way. He says, for instance :

' Now you have seen the defenders of Sevastopol. . . . The principal, joyous thought you have brought away is a conviction of the strength of the Russian people ; and this conviction you gained, not by looking at all these traverses, breastworks, cunningly interlaced trenches, mines and cannon, one on top of another, of which you could make nothing, but from eyes, words, and actions—in short, from seeing what is called the " spirit "—of the defenders of Sevastopol.'

To everything a man can do by his own effort Tolstoy was keenly alive and sympathetic ; but when it came to a complex co-ordinated plan, involving the subordination of many to one Commander, he felt suspicious or even hostile.

It was in March, just when he was recovering from the fit of depression that induced him to gamble, that he noted in his Diary : ' A conversation about Divinity and Faith has suggested to me a great and stupendous idea, to the realization of which I feel myself capable

of devoting my life. This idea is the founding of a new religion corresponding to the present state of mankind: the religion of Christianity, but purged of dogma and mysticism: a practical religion, not promising future bliss but giving bliss on earth. I understand that to accomplish this the conscious labour of generations will be needed. One generation will bequeath the idea to the next, and some day fanaticism or reason will accomplish it. Deliberately to promote the union of mankind by religion—that is the basic thought which, I hope, will dominate me.'

In August he took part in the battle of the Chernaya (Black River), a last unsuccessful attempt to relieve Sevastopol.

The end of the siege was approaching, and Tolstoy, having asked to be allowed to return to Sevastopol, reached the Star Fort on the north side of the Roadstead, just in time to witness the capture of the Malakhov by the French—a scene he describes in *Sevastopol in August*. (The three Sevastopol stories, with some others, are included in the volume *Sevastopol*, issued by Constable & Co., London.)

The loss of the Malakhov rendered the further defence of the town impossible, and the following night the Russians blew up and destroyed such munitions of war as they could not remove from the bastions, while the garrison was withdrawn across the bridge to the northern side of the Roadstead. To Tolstoy was deputed the task of clearing the Fifth and Sixth Bastions before they were abandoned to the Allies, and to him also was entrusted the task of collating the reports of the action received from the various Artillery Commanders. This experience produced in him the supreme contempt for detailed military histories which he often expressed in later years. He says:



'I regret I did not keep a copy of those reports. They were an excellent example of that naïve, inevitable kind of military falsehood, out of which descriptions are compiled. I think many of my comrades who drew up those reports will laugh on reading these lines, remembering how, by order of their Commander, they wrote what they could not know.'

Carrying among other dispatches the report he had himself compiled, Tolstoy was sent as Courier to Petersburg; and this terminated his personal experience of war.

He was still only a Sub-Lieutenant, his hopes of promotion had come to nothing owing to a suspicion (partly justified) that he was the author of some satirical soldiers' songs which were being sung throughout the army.

The impression Tolstoy created in his regiment has been described by one of his fellow-officers in the following words :

'How Tolstoy woke us all up in those hard times of war, with his stories and his rapidly composed couplets! He was really the soul of the battery. When he was with us we did not notice how time flew, and there was no end to the general gaiety. . . . When the Count was away, when he trotted off to Simferopol, we all hung our heads. He would vanish for one, two, or three days. . . . At last he would return—the very picture of a prodigal son! Sombre, worn out, and dissatisfied with himself. . . . Then he would take me aside, quite apart, and would begin his confessions. He would tell me all: how he had caroused, gambled, and where he had spent his days and nights; and all the time, if you will believe me, he would condemn himself and suffer as though he were a real criminal. He was so distressed that it was pitiful to see him.

That's the sort of man he was. In a word, a queer fellow, and to tell the truth one I could not quite understand. He was however a rare comrade, a most honourable fellow, and a man one can never forget !'

His private Diary bears witness to the constantly renewed struggle that went on within him, as well as to his profound dissatisfaction with himself. Here for instance is an estimate of himself entered in his Diary at the commencement of the war, while he was still at Silistria :

' I am incontinent, undecided, inconstant, and stupidly vain and vehement, like all characterless people. I am not brave. I am not methodical in life, and am so lazy that idleness has become an almost unconquerable habit of mine.

' I am clever, but my cleverness has not yet been thoroughly tested on anything ; I have neither practical nor social nor business ability.

' I am honest, that is to say I love goodness and have formed a habit of loving it, and when I swerve from it I am dissatisfied with myself and return to it gladly ; but there is a thing I love more than goodness and that is fame. I am so ambitious, and so little has this feeling been gratified, that should I have to choose between fame and goodness, I fear I may often choose the former.

' Yes, I am not modest, and therefore I am proud at heart though shamefaced and shy in society.'

That is a grossly unfair estimate of himself, but shows just the sort of eager injustice to any one who fails to reach the high standard Tolstoy sets up that always characterized him.

Tolstoy (if I may anticipate) came ultimately to regard war and preparation for war as immoral, and wished that conviction to become so strong and general

as to render it impossible for any government to make war. The actual workings of political systems and international relations were things he almost ignored. He cared immensely about what should be, but forgot that it can only be approached by slow and difficult steps, to take which sure-footedly needs an appreciation of things as they are.

For an ambitious young officer actually engaged in a war, related to the Commander-in-Chief and favourably noticed by the Emperor, even partially to express disapproval of war was difficult ; and Tolstoy himself, many years later, told me that, contending with his desire to tell the truth as he saw it, he was aware at the time of his Sevastopol sketches of another feeling prompting him to say what was expected of him.

## CHAPTER III

### BACHELORHOOD

**B**EFORE the war was over Tolstoy appeared in Petersburg and entered the circle of distinguished writers who supported *The Contemporary*. From memoirs some of these men have left, one sees what he was then like, at twenty-seven years of age.

The poet Fet, himself a young officer, made Tolstoy's acquaintance at this time. A couple of years later he purchased an estate at no great distance from Yasnaya Polyana and became a friend of Tolstoy's—one of the few, outside his own family, with whom the latter ever was intimate. Their first acquaintance was however hardly auspicious. Calling on Turgenev, in Petersburg, at ten o'clock one morning, Fet saw an officer's sword hanging in the hall and asked the man-servant whose it was. 'It's Count Tolstoy's sword,' replied the man. 'He is sleeping in the drawing-room. Ivan Sergeyevich (Turgenev) is having breakfast in the study.' During Fet's visit of an hour, he and his host conversed in low tones for fear of waking Tolstoy. 'He is like this all the time,' said Turgenev. 'He came back from his Sevastopol battery, put up here, and is going the pace. Sprees, gipsy-girls, and cards all night long—and then he sleeps like a corpse till two in the afternoon. At first I tried to put the brake on, but now I've given it up and let him do as he likes.'



TOLSTOY AS AN OFFICER IN 1856





Fet tells us that as soon as he met Tolstoy he noticed his instinctive defiance of all accepted opinions, and the first time he saw Tolstoy and Turgenev together he witnessed the desperation to which the former reduced the latter by his biting retorts.

The scene occurred at the lodgings of Nekrasov, the editor of *The Contemporary*.

'I can't admit,' said Tolstoy, 'that what you say expresses your convictions. If I stand at the door with a dagger or a sword and say, "While I am alive no one shall enter here," that shows conviction. But you here try to conceal the true inwardness of your thoughts from one another, and call *that* conviction!'

'Why do you come here?' squeaked Turgenev panting, his voice rising to a falsetto (as always happened when he was disputing). 'Your banner is not here! Go! Go to the salon of Princess Belobelsky-Belozersky!'

'Why should I ask you where I am to go? Besides, empty talk won't become conviction merely because I am, or am not, here,' replied Tolstoy.

The rest of the evidence is of much the same nature. Of readiness to agree, there was hardly a trace in Tolstoy, who never doubted his own sincerity but seldom credited his opponents with that quality.

Another scene in the same house is reported by the novelist Grigorovich, as follows:

'You can't imagine what it was like! Great heavens! Turgenev squeaked and squeaked, holding his hand to his throat, and, with the eyes of a dying gazelle, whispered, "I can't stand any more! I have bronchitis!" and began walking to and fro through the three rooms.—"Bronchitis is an imaginary illness," growls Tolstoy after him. "Bronchitis is a metal!"'

'Of course Nekrasov's heart sank: he feared to lose

either of these valuable contributors to *The Contemporary*. We were all agitated and at our wits' end to know what to say. Tolstoy in the middle room lay sulking on the morocco sofa; while Turgenev, spreading out the tails of his short coat, and with his hands in his pockets, strode to and fro through the three rooms. To avert a catastrophe I went to the sofa and said, "Tolstoy, old chap, don't get excited! You don't know how he respects and loves you!"

"I won't allow him to do anything to spite me!" exclaimed Tolstoy with dilated nostrils. "There! Now he keeps marching past me on purpose, wagging his democratic haunches!"

In another place Grigorovich speaks of Tolstoy's 'readiness to contradict.' It did not matter what opinion was being expressed, and the more authoritative the speaker the more eager was Tolstoy to oppose him and to begin a verbal duel.

'Watching how he listened to the speaker and pierced him with his eyes, and noticing how ironically he pressed his lips together, one conjectured that he was preparing not a direct reply, but such an expression of opinion as would perplex his opponent by its unexpectedness.'

Turgenev confirms this impression of Tolstoy's eagerness to oppose, and adds:

'In Tolstoy the character which afterwards lay at the base of his whole outlook on life early made itself manifest. He never believed in people's sincerity. Every spiritual movement seemed to him false, and he used to pierce those on whom his suspicion fell with his extraordinarily penetrating eyes.' Turgenev goes on to say that personally he had never encountered anything more disconcerting than that inquisitorial look which, accompanied by two or three biting words,



was enough to drive to fury any man who lacked strong self-control.

At this time the ill-success of the Crimean War had dealt a blow to the prestige of the Tsardom, and wide-reaching reforms had become inevitable—among the most important being the abolition of serfdom, the reform of civil and criminal law, and the establishment of a system of Local Government. But Tolstoy did not express much sympathy with these reforms, or show any perception of the benefit that accrues to a nation whose inhabitants interest themselves in public affairs.

Early in 1856, his third brother, Dmitry, died in Orel. Tolstoy says: 'I was particularly horrid at that time. I went to Orel from Petersburg, where I frequented society and was filled with conceit. I felt sorry for my brother, but not very sorry. I paid him a hurried visit, but did not stay at Orel, and he died a few days after I left.' Tolstoy adds: 'I really believe that what hurt me most was that it prevented my taking part in some private theatricals then being got up at Court, to which I had been invited.'

But all this time the desire to reach true happiness continued strong within him, and we find him noting in his Diary: 'The powerful means to true happiness in life is, like a spider, to let flow from oneself on all sides a cobweb of love, and to catch in it all that comes to hand: women, old or young, children, or policemen.'

In March 1856 the Crimean War ended, and in November Tolstoy left the army. In May he had gone to Yasnaya Polyana. On his way he stopped in Moscow and visited the family of Dr. Behrs, a Russian of German origin and a Court physician. One gets a

glimpse of Tolstoy's future wife in a note in his Diary relating to this visit to the Behrs's country house near Moscow. He says: 'The children served us. What dear merry little girls!' Little more than six years later, the second of these 'merry little girls' became Countess Tolstoy!

From Yasnaya he made a round of visits to see his married sister and other neighbours, among them Turgenev, at whose house a gathering of the Tolstoys took place. Special honour was paid to Leo, who comically posed as the hero of a Triumph. He was being crowned and almost covered with flowers, leaves, grass and anything that came handy, when the approach of an unwelcome guest—a lady, a neighbour of Turgenev's—was announced. Thereupon the host seized his head in despair, and the triumpher, with a howl, began to turn rapid catherine-wheel somersaults through the rooms. His sister's husband was quickly bandaged up as an invalid, to be used as an excuse and a protection from the unwelcome intruder.

Towards the end of 1856 Turgenev wrote from France to the eminent critic Druzhinin:

'I hear that you have become very intimate with Tolstoy—and he has become very pleasant and serene. I am very glad. When that new wine has finished fermenting, it will yield a drink fit for the Gods!'

Stories Tolstoy wrote at this time were: *Two Hussars* (included in the volume *Sevastopol*, issued by Constable & Co., London), a rollicking tale with flashes of humour, *Memoirs of a Billiard Marker*, *The Snow Storm*, and *A Squire's Morning*; the last named being, as already mentioned, closely drawn from his own experience when, on first leaving the University, he unsuccessfully attempted to better the condition of his serfs.

These were followed in January 1857 by *Youth*, a continuation of his previously published stories *Childhood* and *Boyhood*.

Despite some headstrong outbursts and many eccentricities, he was a welcome guest in almost any society he cared to frequent, and none of his critics has spoken as harshly of him as he speaks of himself when describing these 'terrible twenty years of coarse dissipation, the service of ambition, vanity, and above all of lust.'

In his *Confession*, written more than twenty years later, when speaking of his religious beliefs at this time, Tolstoy tells us :

'With all my soul I wished to be good ; but I was young, passionate, and alone, completely alone, when I sought goodness.

' . . . I cannot think of those years without horror, loathing, and heartache. I killed men in war and challenged men to duels in order to kill them ; I lost at cards, consumed the labour of the peasants, sentenced them to punishments, lived loosely and deceived people. Lying, robbery, adultery of all kinds, drunkenness, violence, murder—there was no crime I did not commit, and people approved of my conduct, and my contemporaries considered and consider me to be a comparatively moral man.

'So I lived for ten years. . . . At twenty-six years of age' [this should be twenty-seven] 'I returned to Petersburg after the war, and met the writers. They received me as one of themselves and flattered me. The view of life of these people, my comrades in authorship, consisted in this: that life in general goes on developing, and in this development we—artists and poets—have the chief influence. Our vocation is to teach mankind. And lest the simple

question should suggest itself : What do I know and what can I teach ? it is explained that this need not be known, and that the artist and poet teach unconsciously ! I was considered an admirable artist, and therefore it was very natural for me to adopt this theory. I, an artist, wrote and taught, without myself knowing what. For this I was paid money : I had excellent food, lodging, women, and society ; and I had fame, which showed that what I taught was very good. And I lived a considerable time in this faith without doubting its validity. But in the second and especially in the third year of this life I began to doubt the infallibility of this religion, and to examine it.'

When he was twenty-nine, Tolstoy went abroad. Except for his short campaign in Turkey he had never been out of Russia before.

While in France he wrote a story, *Albert*, founded on his experience with the drunken musician Rudolph, mentioned in a previous chapter.

In Paris Tolstoy was present at an execution. The sight impressed him profoundly. He wrote in his Diary : ' I rose at seven o'clock and drove to see an execution. A stout white healthy neck and breast ; he kissed the Gospels, and then—Death. How senseless ! . . . I have not received this strong impression for nothing. I am not a man of politics. Morals and art I know, love, and can [deal with]. The guillotine long prevented my sleeping and forced me to reflect.'

Tolstoy had the gift of stating a case briefly and clearly, and never did he sum himself up better than in the sentences : ' I am not a man of politics. Morals and art I know, love, and can.'

His sketch *Lucerne*, published that year and based



on an incident that occurred while he was in that town, foreshadows the hostile feeling towards wealth which he so often and so poignantly expressed during the later years of his life.

A few weeks later he returned to Russia.

In Petersburg he found that he had been forgotten by a world absorbed in the great measures of public reform then in course of preparation. Here is a sentence from his Diary: 'Petersburg at first mortified me and then put me right. My reputation has fallen and hardly gives a squeak, and I felt much hurt; but now I am tranquil. I know I have something to say, and power to say it strongly; and the public may then say what it will. But I must work conscientiously, exerting all my powers; then . . . let them spit upon the altar.'

By the end of that month he was back in Moscow, established in furnished apartments with his sister and his brother Nicholas. His friend Fet tells us that the Countess Mary Tolstoy (who was an accomplished pianist) used to come to his house for music in the evenings, accompanied sometimes by both her brothers and sometimes by Nicholas alone, who would say: 'Leo has again donned his evening suit and white tie, and gone to a ball.'

Gymnastics were fashionable in Moscow, and Tolstoy was often to be found at the principal Gymnasium, where, dressed in gymnastic attire, he might be seen intent on springing over the vaulting-horse without upsetting a cone placed on it. He always was expert at physical exercises, quick at games and sports, a swimmer and an excellent skater.

Early in 1858 an aunt, who had been a friend of his boyhood,—the Countess Alexandra A. Tolstoy, Maid of Honour to one of the Grand Duchesses,—came to

Moscow. A warm friendship grew up between the nephew and the aunt. She was only about ten years his senior, but he generally called her 'grandma,' and they chaffed and teased one another abundantly. Through this aunt (who died only a few years before her nephew) Tolstoy often received information of what went on at Court, and was sometimes able indirectly to exert influence 'in the highest circles.' The following is a letter he wrote at this time, after her return to Petersburg :

'Grandma!—Spring!

'For good people it is excellent to live in the world; and even for men such as me, it is sometimes good. In Nature, in the air, in everything, is hope, a future—an attractive future. . . . Sometimes one deceives oneself and thinks that happiness and a future await not only Nature but oneself also, and then one feels happy. I am now in such a state, and with characteristic egotism hasten to write to you of things that interest only me. When I review things sanely, I know very well that I am an old, frozen little potato, and one already boiled with sauce; but spring so acts on me that I sometimes catch myself in the full blaze of imagining myself a plant which with others has only now blossomed, and which will peacefully, simply, and joyfully grow in God's world. The result is that at this time of year such an internal clearing-out goes on in me, such a cleansing and ordering, as only those who have experienced this feeling can imagine. Away with all the old! All worldly conventions, all idleness, all egotism, all vices, all confused indefinite attachments, all regrets, even repentances—away with you all! . . . Make room for the wonderful little flowers whose buds are swelling and growing with the spring!'

April found him again at Yasnaya, where he spent most of the summer with 'Aunty' Tatiana.

Fet's account of that lady accords with Tolstoy's own affectionate recollection of her. Fet says that he and his wife 'made the acquaintance of Tolstoy's charming old aunt, Tatiana Alexandrovna Ergolsky, who received us with that old-world affability which puts one at one's ease on entering a new house.'

Many years later, Tolstoy jotted down his memories of the long autumn and winter evenings spent with her—to which, he says, he owed his best thoughts and impulses :

'The chief charm of that life lay in the absence of any material care; in good relations with those nearest,—relations no one could spoil; and in the leisureliness and the unconsciousness of flying time. . . .

'When, after living badly at a neighbour's in Tula, with cards, gipsies, hunting, and stupid vanity, I used to return home and come to her, by old habit we would kiss each other's hand, I her dear energetic hand, and she my dirty vicious hand; and also by old habit, we greeted one another in French, and I . . . would sit down in the comfortable arm-chair. She knew well all I had been doing and regretted it, but never reproached me, retaining always the same gentleness and love. . . . The chief characteristic of her life, which involuntarily infected me, was her wonderful general kindness to every one without exception. I try to recall a single instance of her being angry or speaking a sharp word, or condemning any one, and I cannot recall one such instance in the course of thirty years. She spoke well of our real aunt, who had bitterly hurt her by taking us away from her. . . . As to her kindly treatment of the servants—that goes without saying. She had grown up in the idea that there



are masters and servants, but she utilized her authority only to serve them. . . . She never blamed me directly for my evil life, though she suffered on my account. My brother Sergey, too, whom she also loved warmly, she did not reproach, even when he took a gipsy girl to live with him. . . . She never told us in words how to live, never preached to us. All her moral work was done internally; externally one only saw her deeds—and not even deeds: there were no deeds; but all her life, peaceful, sweet, submissive and loving, not troubled or self-satisfied, but a life of quiet unobtrusive love. . . . She often called me by my father's name (Nicholas) and this pleased me very much, because it showed that her conceptions of me and of my father mingled in her love for us both.

‘It was not her love for me alone that was joyous. What was joyous was the atmosphere of love to all who were present or absent, alive or dead, and even to animals. . . .’

After telling of her goodness and her affection Tolstoy says in his Memoirs that, though he appreciated his happiness with her, he did not at the time nearly realize its full value; and he adds:

‘She was fond of keeping sweets: figs, ginger-breads, and dates, in various jars in her room. I cannot forget, nor remember without a cruel pang of remorse, that I repeatedly refused her money she wanted for such things, and how she, sighing sadly, remained silent. It is true I was in need of money, but I cannot now remember without horror that . . . it was to her, to her, that I refused the small pleasure of having figs and chocolate (and not so much for herself as to treat me) and of being able to give a trifle to those who begged of her. . . . Dear, dead Aunty, forgive me! *Si jeunesse savait, si vieillesse pouvait* (if youth but

knew, if age but could), I mean not in the sense of the good lost for oneself in youth, but in the sense of the good not given and the evil done to those who are no more.'

Of Leo's life at Yasnaya at this time, his brother Nicholas gave Fet the following account :

'Lyovochka (pet name for Leo) is zealously trying to become acquainted with peasant life and with farming, of both of which, like the rest of us, he has till now had but a superficial knowledge. But I am not sure what sort of acquaintance will result from his efforts : Lyovochka wants to get hold of everything at once, without omitting anything—even his gymnastics. So he has rigged up a bar under his study window. And of course, prejudice apart, with which he wages such fierce war, he is right : gymnastics do not interfere with farming ; but the steward sees things differently and says : " One comes to the master for orders, and he hangs head downward in a red jacket, holding on by one knee to a perch and swings himself. His hair hangs down and blows about, the blood comes to his face, and one does not know whether to listen to his orders or to wonder at him ! "

'Lyovochka is delighted with the way the serf Ufan sticks out his arms when ploughing ; and so Ufan has become for him an emblem of village strength, like the legendary Michael ; and he himself, sticking his elbows out wide, takes to the plough and " ufanizes." '

In October 1858 Tolstoy, in a characteristic letter, writes to Fet :

' The height of wisdom and fortitude for me is to enjoy the poetry of others, and not to let my own (fiction) loose among men in ugly garb, but to consume it myself with my daily bread. But at times one

suddenly wishes to be a great man, and it is so annoying that this has not yet come about ! One even hurries to get up quicker or to finish dinner in order to begin. . . . Hunting has bored me to death. The weather is excellent, but I do not hunt alone.'

In company Tolstoy was however a keen sportsman, and in December 1858 nearly lost his life at a hunting party to which he had been invited. He has told the story with some modifications in one of his tales for children contained in *Twenty-three Tales* (published by the Oxford Press, World's Classics series).

A famous professional huntsman supervised the proceedings, and the guests were advised to stamp down the snow around them, so as to give themselves room to move freely, but Tolstoy (with his usual objection to routine methods) argued that as they were out to shoot the bear and not to box with her it was useless to tread down the snow. He therefore stood with his two-barrelled gun in his hand, surrounded by snow almost up to his waist.

Presently a large she-bear came at him unexpectedly, and Tolstoy, taken by surprise, did not fire until the beast was within six yards. His first shot missed, and the bear was within three yards of him when his second shot hit her in the mouth. It failed to stop her rush, and she knocked him over on to his back in the snow. Carried past by her own impetus, she soon returned ; and the next thing Tolstoy knew was that he was being weighed down by something heavy and warm, and that his face was being drawn into the beast's mouth. The bear, after one or two misses, got her teeth into the flesh above and below his left eye. At this moment the huntsman, armed only with a small switch, came running up, shouting at the bear, which thereupon took fright and rushed off.

Next day she was followed up and killed, but Tolstoy long retained a noticeable scar as a memento of the encounter.

*Family Happiness*, a short novel, was published early in 1859, and indicates the thoughts of marriage which were then working in his mind.

All this time he was not at peace with himself. At the commencement of the new year he notes in his Diary: 'The burden of the estate, the burden of bachelor life, and all sorts of doubts and pessimistic feelings agitate my mind.' The state of health of his brother Nicholas was also causing the family great anxiety. In a letter to Fet, Leo Tolstoy says:

'I am greatly at sixes and sevens with myself. Farming on the scale on which it is carried out on my estate, crushes me. To "ufanize" (to work like a peasant) is a thing I only see afar off. Family affairs, Nicholas's illness (of which we have as yet no news from abroad), and my sister's departure (she leaves me in three days' time) also crush and occupy me. Bachelor life, that is not having a wife, and the thought that it is getting too late, torments me from a third side. In general everything is now out of tune with me.'

Under these circumstances he went abroad again in July 1860, going with his sister and her children to Berlin, where he had toothache for four days and suffered from headache and hæmorrhoidal attacks, for which he was ordered to take a cure at Kissingen.

He went on to Leipzig, Dresden and Kissingen, made the acquaintance of the novelist Auerbach and of Julius Froebel, nephew of the founder of the Kindergarten system. At Eisenach he visited the Wartburg, where Luther was confined after the Diet of Worms. The personality of the great Protestant reformer interested him, and after seeing the room in

which he commenced his translation of the Bible, Tolstoy noted in his Diary: 'Luther was great!'

Meanwhile Nicholas Tolstoy's health had been growing worse, and the doctors decided that he must winter at Hyères on the Mediterranean, whither Leo and his sister accompanied him. At Hyères Nicholas grew rapidly worse, and he died on the 20th September.

On 13th October 1860 Leo Tolstoy noted in his Diary:

'It is nearly a month since Nicholas died. That event has torn me terribly from life. Again the question: Why? Already the departure draws near. Whither? Nowhere. I try to write, I force myself, but do not get on, because I cannot attach enough importance to the work to supply the necessary strength and patience. At the very time of the funeral the thought occurred to me to write a Materialist Gospel, a Life of Christ as a Materialist.'

One sees how, bit by bit, some seeds of the work Tolstoy was to do in later years planted themselves in his mind. In early childhood came the enthusiasm for the Ant-Brotherhood, and the influence of his brother and of Aunt Tatiana; then an acquaintance with the writings of Voltaire and other sceptics, undermining belief in the miraculous; then, at Sevastopol, the idea of 'founding a new religion: Christianity purged of dogma and mysticism'; then a study of Luther's Reformation; and now the idea of a rationalist Life of Christ.

To Fet he wrote of his brother's death:

'On 20th September he died, literally in my arms. Nothing in my life has so impressed me. It is true, as he said, that nothing is worse than death. And when one realizes that *that* is the end of all—then there is nothing worse than life. Why strive or try,



since of what was Nicholas Tolstoy nothing remains his? . . .

'A thousand times I say to myself: "Let the dead bury their dead." One must make some use of the strength which remains to one, but one cannot persuade a stone to fall upwards instead of downwards whither it is drawn. One cannot laugh at a joke one is weary of. One cannot eat when one does not want to. And what is life all for, when to-morrow the torments of death will begin . . . and will end in annihilation?'

Those who have read the works Tolstoy wrote during the quarter of a century which succeeded his brother's death will be aware how long he remained in doubt as to a future life, and how he expressed now one and now another view of the matter.

Of how he appeared to other people at Hyères we get a glimpse later, from his sister, who tells us that they had been invited to an At Home at Prince Dundukov-Korsakov's, but Tolstoy, who was to have been the lion of the occasion, failed to put in an appearance. The company, which included all the 'best' people, were getting dull despite everything the hostess could devise for their amusement, when at last, very late, Count Tolstoy was announced. The hostess and her guests immediately brightened up, but what was their astonishment to see him appear in tourist garb and wearing wooden *sabots*! He had been for a long walk and, returning late, had come to the party without calling at his lodgings to change; and no sooner was he in the room than he began assuring everybody that wooden *sabots* were the very best and most comfortable foot-gear, and advising every one to adopt them. Even in those days he was a man to whom all things were allowed, and the evening instead of being spoilt became all the gayer from his eccentricity.



The children he met were all devoted to him. One of those whom he used to take out for excursions has told of how Tolstoy played with them, taught them, did gymnastics and settled their disputes. Of their outings, he says: 'On the way Tolstoy used to tell us tales: I remember one about a golden horse and a giant tree from the top of which all the seas and all towns were visible. Knowing that my lungs were delicate, he often took me on his shoulder and continued his tale as we walked along. Need I say that we would have laid down our lives for him?'

On leaving Hyères, Tolstoy, his sister and her children visited Italy, but little record remains of this journey, and it is only slightly reflected in any of his writings.

He returned to Paris *via* Marseilles,—and in Paris spent a large part of his time in omnibuses, amusing himself by observing the people.

From France he went on to London, where he remained six weeks, not enjoying his visit much as he suffered severely from toothache nearly all the time. It was characteristic of Tolstoy that though he was often a victim of toothache and was also much tried by digestive troubles, he never had his teeth attended to by a dentist. A dentist's establishment seemed to him so unnatural and artificial that it must be wrong. Moreover, dentists do not always do their work well; and toothache—if one endures it long enough—subsides; and the majority of mankind have got along without dentists in the past. So he put up with it as one of the ills it is best to bear patiently.

During his stay in London he saw much of Alexander Herzen, who was then editing *Kolokol*, the most influential periodical ever issued by a Russian exile. In England, as everywhere else, he examined the educational methods in vogue. He also visited the

House of Commons and heard Palmerston speak for three hours ; but, he told me, he could form no opinion of him as an orator, for ' at that time I knew English with my eyes but not with my ears.'

On 3rd March (new style), the day of Alexander II's famous Manifesto emancipating the serfs, Tolstoy left London for Russia *via* Brussels. In that city he made the acquaintance of Proudhon (the author of *Qu'est-ce que la Propriété?*), to whom Herzen had given him a letter of introduction. Proudhon impressed Tolstoy as a strong man who had the courage of his opinions ; and the social, political and economic views Tolstoy expounded a quarter of a century later are deeply dyed with Proudhonism. Both writers consider that property is robbery ; interest immoral ; peaceful anarchy the desirable culmination of social progress, and that every man should be a law unto himself, restrained solely by reason and conscience.

While in Brussels Tolstoy wrote *Polikushka*—almost the only story of his (except *A Squire's Morning*) that implies a condemnation of serfdom. It tells of a serf who, having lost some money belonging to his mistress, hangs himself. It was published a couple of years later, and ranks among the best of Tolstoy's stories.

In April 1861, after being abroad nearly ten months, he re-entered Russia, where he remained for the rest of his life.

During his absence he had been appointed *Arbiter of the Peace* for his own district near Tula. The duties of the office were to settle disputes between the serfs and their former proprietors.

The books which Tolstoy tells us most influenced him after he left the University and before his marriage were : Goethe's *Hermann und Dorothea* ; Hugo's

*Notre Dame de Paris* ; Plato's *Phædo* and *Symposium* in French translations ; and the *Iliad* and *Odyssey* in Russian versions ; also the poems of Tyuchev, Koltsov and of his friend Fet.

On his return to Russia from Western Europe he brought with him complete editions of the works of several of the greatest European writers. They were detained at the Custom-House to be submitted to the Censor and, as Tolstoy plaintively remarked nearly half a century later, ' he is still reading them ! '

## CHAPTER IV

### PEASANT SCHOOL AND MARRIAGE

**I**N the spring of 1861, Tolstoy wrote to congratulate Fet on having become a landed proprietor :

‘ I do not know how to rejoice sufficiently when I hear or think of your activity as a farmer, and I am rather proud to have had at least some hand in the matter. . . . It is good to have a friend ; but he may die or go away, or one may not be able to keep pace with him ; but Nature, to which one is wedded by a notarial deed or to which one has been born by inheritance, is still better. It is one’s own bit of Nature ! She is cold, obdurate, disdainful, and exacting, but then she is a friend one does not lose till death, and even then one will be absorbed into her. I am however at present less devoted to this friend ; I have other affairs that attract me ; yet but for the consciousness that she is there, and that if I stumble she is at hand to hold on to—life would be but a sad business.’

A few days later Tolstoy visited Turgenev. The two went together to see Fet, and during that visit a quarrel occurred which kept the two great novelists apart for twenty years.

A dispute arose about the education of Turgenev’s natural daughter, and in a moment of irritation he threatened to strike Tolstoy for a remark the latter

made. After they had left the house, Tolstoy sent a letter to Turgenev demanding an apology, and followed this up with another containing a peremptory challenge to fight a duel. Turgenev replied to the first letter admitting that he had been in the wrong, and asking pardon.

No duel was fought, but the irritation aroused was not quickly allayed, and even good-natured Fet got into temporary trouble by trying to reconcile the irascible novelists. In reply to a letter from him, Tolstoy wrote :

‘ I request you not to write to me again, as I shall return your letters, as well as Turgenev’s, unopened.’

Before four months had passed Tolstoy however repented of the quarrel, and wrote to Turgenev expressing regret at their hostility, and adding : ‘ If I have insulted you, forgive me ; I find it unendurably hard to think I have an enemy.’

He noted in his Diary in October 1861 :

‘ Yesterday I received a letter from Turgenev in which he accuses me of saying he is a coward and of circulating copies of my letter. I have written to him that it is nonsense, and I have added : “ You call my action dishonourable and you formerly wished to punch my head ; but I consider myself guilty, ask pardon, and refuse the challenge.” ’

Even then the matter was not at an end, for in 1862 Tolstoy took umbrage at a friendly message Turgenev sent through Fet, and visited his wrath on the latter. To be profoundly humble and forgiving on his own initiative was easier for him than to let an opponent have an opinion of his own. He liked things quite clear-cut and definite, and it always complicates matters to have to reckon with some one else’s views. We find Turgenev again writing to Fet from Paris :



TOLSTOY IN 1862





' First of all I must ask your pardon for the quite unexpected tile (*tuile*, as the French say) that tumbled on your head as a result of my letter. The one thing which somewhat consoles me is that I could not possibly have expected such a freak on Tolstoy's part, and thought I was arranging all for the best. It seems it is a wound of a kind better not touched at all.'

In this whole story one may detect traces of the qualities that made Tolstoy so interesting and so perplexing a personality. He cared intensely about everything with which he was occupied. Turgenev and Turgenev's opinions and conduct were of tremendous importance to him. So were his own views of how young ladies should be brought up. So was the question whether he ought to challenge his enemy; and, later on, the question whether he ought to forgive him, and whether Fet should be allowed to act as intermediary. It is this fact—that he cared about things a hundred times more than other people care about them—that made him a genius and a great writer. What was admirable was not that he acted well (as a matter of fact he often acted very badly) but that he intensely *wished* to act well.

At the same time the incident throws light on that side of Tolstoy's character which, despite the real charm he possessed and the fact that many men and women were immensely attracted by his writings, caused him to have few intimate friends and to be constantly misunderstood.

In the office of Arbiter of the Peace, to which he had been appointed, Tolstoy tried his best to act fairly in settling disputes between the serfs and their former proprietors, but from the start his unsuitability for duties involving methodical care was obvious.

The very first 'charter,' regulating the relations between a landlord and his newly-liberated peasants, that he sent up for confirmation to the Government Board for Peasant Affairs, was signed as follows: 'At the request of such-and-such peasants, because of their illiteracy, the house-serf so-and-so has signed this charter for them.' Not a single name did the document contain! As Tolstoy had dictated the words, so his servant had written them down, and the charter had been sealed and sent off without being read over, and without the names of the people it referred to being inserted.

He often showed wonderful patience in dealing with the peasants, though they were exasperatingly pertinacious in demanding more than it was possible to grant. With the landowners he had even more trouble than with the peasants. He received from them many threatening letters, plans were formed to have him beaten, he was to have been challenged to a duel, denunciations against him were sent to those in authority, and we find the Marshal of the Nobility of Tula writing to the Minister of Home Affairs to complain of Tolstoy's appointment, on the ground that he was disliked by the neighbouring landowners and unsuitable for the post.

In July 1861, after some three months of the work, he jotted down in his Diary: 'Arbitration has given me but little material [for literary work], has brought me into conflict with all the landed proprietors, and has upset my health.' About a year after he first assumed the office, the Senate informed the Governor of Tula that it 'had decided to discharge the Lieutenant of Artillery, Count Leo Tolstoy, on the ground of ill-health,' from the post of Arbitrator of the Peace.

Tiresome petty administrative work, consisting at

best of compromises and of decisions forced by circumstance rather than on principles of abstract justice such as were dear to Tolstoy's soul, could not have been an occupation satisfactory to him.

Concurrently with his duties as Arbiter, Tolstoy carried on an enterprise in which he had to deal with people younger and more easy to mould than the peasants and proprietors whose quarrels he found so hard to adjust; and during the winter of 1861-62 he devoted himself with fervour to providing education for the peasant children of Yasnaya and the surrounding district. It was a kind of work greatly needed and much neglected in Russia.

One chief aim of his travels abroad had been to study the theory and practice of education; and not only did he personally devote himself to the school at Yasnaya, but in the surrounding neighbourhood eleven other schools were started all more or less inspired by his ideals and encouraged by his co-operation. He also, during 1862, produced and edited a monthly magazine, *Yasnaya Polyana*, to propagate his views on education and make known the results attained in his school.

In this work, Tolstoy showed the qualities and limitations which in later years marked his other propagandist activities. There was the same characteristic selection of a task of great importance, the same readiness to sweep aside and condemn nearly all that civilized humanity had accomplished up to then, the same assurance that he could untie the Gordian knot, and the same power of devoted genius enabling him really to achieve more than one would have supposed possible, though not a tithe of what he set out to do.

The position he took up is one not likely to commend

itself to schoolmasters who have to deal with large classes, and who lack the influence Tolstoy had over his scholars, the enthusiasm he was able to throw into his educational experiments, or the touch of genius that enabled him to achieve the apparently impossible—for the children enjoyed complete liberty!

No fees were charged, and the relations between the children and Tolstoy are illustrated by the account a visitor has given of seeing him rush through a gate followed by a crowd of merry youngsters who were snowballing him. Tolstoy was intent on making his escape, but on seeing the visitor he changed his mind, acknowledged his defeat, and surrendered to his triumphant pursuers.

The following is Tolstoy's description of the school :  
' No one brings anything with him, neither books nor copy-books. No homework is set them. Not only do they carry nothing in their hands, they have nothing to carry even in their heads. They are not obliged to remember any lesson, nor any of yesterday's work. They are not tormented by the thought of the impending lesson. They bring only themselves, their receptive nature, and an assurance that it will be as jolly in school to-day as it was yesterday. They do not think of their classes till they have begun. No one is ever scolded for being late, and they never are late, except perhaps some of the older boys whose fathers occasionally keep them at home to do some work. In such cases the boy comes to school running fast and panting.

' They sit where they like : on the benches, tables, window-sills, floor, or in the arm-chair. The girls always sit together. . . . Friends from the same village, especially the little ones (among whom there is most comradeship), always sit together. . . . During



lessons I have never seen them whispering, pinching, giggling, laughing behind their hands, or complaining of one another to the teacher. . . .

' Sometimes teacher and pupils are so carried away that a lesson lasts three hours instead of one. Sometimes the pupils themselves cry: "Go on, go on!" and shout contemptuously to any who are tired: "If you're tired, go to the little ones!"'

The school was closed, or nearly so, during the summer, as most of the pupils then helped their parents with field work—obtaining, Tolstoy considers, more mental development that way than they could have done in any school. To make up for this the hours of study in winter were long.

There is hardly anything in the whole range of Tolstoy's writings more charming than his description of a winter evening's walk with some of these peasant boys, to whom he told tales of Caucasian robbers, Cossacks and Hadji Murad, and with whom he discussed the meaning and the purpose of art. That description is too long to quote here, but can be found on pages 254-260 of vol. i. of *The Life of Tolstoy* (published by Constable & Co., London, and Dodd, Mead & Co., New York).

In his school Tolstoy found that the absence of books suitable for children to read was one of the greatest difficulties he had to encounter. Connected with this difficulty of finding books suited to the understanding of peasants and of peasant children, was the parallel difficulty of finding literary subjects that interested them. This was first overcome by reading the Old Testament to them, and what he says on this subject is also interesting and important. (See *Life of Tolstoy*, vol. i. pp. 263-266.) He asks: 'What means have we of lifting a corner of the veil that shuts the



children off from the wonder-land of knowledge? . . . I thought, as many think, that being myself in the world to which I had to introduce my pupils, it would be easy for me to do this; and I taught the rudiments, explained natural phenomena, and told them, as the primers do, that the fruits of learning are sweet; but the scholars did not believe me and kept aloof. Then I tried reading the Bible to them, and quite took possession of them. A corner of the veil was lifted, and they yielded themselves to me completely. They fell in love with the book and with learning and with me. It only remained for me to guide them on.'

The only other books the people understand and like, says Tolstoy, are those written not for them but by them; such as folk-tales and collections of songs, legends, proverbs, verses and riddles.

In a remarkable article, Tolstoy tells how he discovered that Fedka and Syomka (boys of ten and twelve) possessed literary ability of the highest order. Some stories written by these children were published in the magazine; and Tolstoy declares them to be, in their way, equal to anything in Russian literature.

One of the profoundest convictions impressed on him by his educational experiments was that the peasants, and their children, have a large share of artistic capacity, and that art is of such immense importance to the human race because of its humanizing effect, and because it arouses and shapes our feelings and faculties.

The principle he aimed at carrying out was that of liberty in education. He declared that 'A child or a man is receptive only when he is roused; and therefore to regard a merry spirit in school as an enemy or a hindrance is the crudest of blunders.

'The pupil's state of mind is the most important

factor in successful education ; and to secure good results *freedom* is indispensable. No child should be forced to learn what it does not want to or when it does not wish to.

‘ One need only glance at one and the same child at home or in the street and at school. Here you see a vivacious, inquisitive being, with a smile in his eye and on his mouth, seeking information everywhere as a pleasure, and clearly and often forcibly expressing his thoughts in his own way ; while there you see a weary shrinking creature repeating, merely with his lips, some one else’s thoughts in some one else’s words, with an air of fatigue, fear, and listlessness : a creature whose soul has retreated like a snail into its shell.’

He defines education as ‘ a human activity having for its basis a desire for equality and a constant tendency to advance in knowledge.’ Schools based on compulsion supply, he declares, ‘ not a shepherd for the flock but a flock for the shepherd.’

It is disconcerting to one who admires Tolstoy’s educational work to see how scornfully he spoke of it sixteen years later in his *Confession*. But that was always his way : the old is useless and worthless and bad ; only the new, the unachieved, the fresh ideal, is admirable. For this new ideal, he decries all that the past has produced—including himself and his previous efforts.

In his *Confession* he writes : ‘ After spending a year at school work I went abroad a second time, to discover how to teach others while myself knowing nothing. And it seemed to me that I had learnt this abroad, and in the year of the Peasants’ Emancipation I returned to Russia armed with all this wisdom ; and having become an Arbiter I began to teach both the uneducated peasants in schools and the educated

classes through a magazine I published. Things appeared to be going well, but I felt I was not quite sound mentally, and that matters could not long continue in that way. And I should perhaps then have come to the state of despair which I reached fifteen years later, had there not been one side of life still unexplored by me, which promised me happiness : that was marriage.

‘ For a year I busied myself with Arbitration work, the schools, and the magazine ; and I became so worn-out—as a result especially of my mental confusion—and so hard was my struggle as Arbiter, so obscure the results of my activity in the schools, so repulsive my shuffling in the magazine (which always amounted to one and the same thing : a desire to teach everybody and to hide the fact that I did not know what to teach) that I fell ill, mentally rather than physically, threw up everything and went away to the Bashkirs in the steppes, to breathe fresh air, drink kumys (fermented mare’s milk), and live an animal life.’

He went first to Moscow, where a friend in the Club found him vexed and indignant that his brother had lost Rs. 7000 at cards in a few hours. ‘ How can men do such things ? ’ said Tolstoy. Half an hour later the same friend saw Tolstoy himself playing Chinese billiards (a game something like bagatelle, played on a board with wire impediments), and learnt that he had lost Rs. 1000 to a stranger.

Being short of ready-money to pay this debt, he sold *The Cossacks*, a novel based on his own Caucasian experiences, which he had had on hand for several years. Turgenev said of it : ‘ The more often I read the story, the more convinced I am that it is the *chef d’œuvre* of Tolstoy and of all Russian narrative literature.’

From Moscow Tolstoy went to the Province of

Samara for the kumys cure, and while he was there an event occurred at Yasnaya which caused him great annoyance.

In consequence of a police-spy's false report, gendarmes searched Tolstoy's house and estate for treasonable documents and for a secret printing-press supposed to be there. The floors of the stables were broken up with crow-bars and the pond was dragged, but nothing more incriminating than crayfish and carp was found. The cupboards, drawers, boxes and desks in the house were opened and searched. A police officer from Tula detained Tolstoy's sister in the library till he had finished reading aloud Tolstoy's private Diary, which contained most intimate confessions. Besides creating general confusion, the police arrested teachers, and spread wild doubts among the peasants, to whom school education was still a novelty held somewhat in suspicion.

Tolstoy was terribly indignant at this outrage, and almost decided 'to leave Russia, where one cannot know from moment to moment what awaits one,' and to settle in England.

A further search having been threatened, he wrote to his aunt, the Countess A. A. Tolstoy, in Petersburg, saying : ' I have loaded pistols in my room and am waiting to see how this matter will end.' He adds : ' I often say to myself, How exceedingly fortunate it was that I was not at home at the time ! Had I been there, I should certainly now be awaiting my trial for murder ! '

A few weeks later Alexander II spent some time in Moscow and Tolstoy wrote a letter claiming reparation, and found means to have it handed to the Emperor. After a while the Governor of Tula transmitted the Emperor's expression of regret for what had occurred ;

but it is easy to imagine the effect this police-search had on Tolstoy, and how it intensified his dislike of Government.

His attention however was soon diverted to quite other matters. On his thirty-fourth birthday, 28th August 1862, he jotted down in his Diary the words: 'Ugly mug! Do not think of marriage; your calling is of another kind'; but consciously or unconsciously he was by this time in love with Sophia Andreyevna Behrs, to whom in September he made overtures in the manner described in *Anna Karenina*, where Levin proposes to Kitty by writing down the initial letters of what he has to say, letting her guess their meaning—which she does successfully. He followed this up by a formal proposal of marriage by letter, and was accepted. There had, before this, been some misunderstanding in the family as to which of the three daughters he was courting; for it was usual, when a man appeared in a family as a suitor, for him to take the eldest daughter, and Sophia was the second of the three.

Tolstoy's sense of honour led him to hand his future wife the Diary<sup>1</sup> in which, mingled with hopes, prayers, self-castigations and self-denunciations, the sins and excesses of his bachelorhood were recorded. To the girl, this revelation came as a great shock; but after a night passed in weeping bitterly, she returned the book and forgave the past.

The marriage took place on 23rd September 1862, within a week of the proposal; the bridegroom being thirty-four and the bride eighteen years of age. The

<sup>1</sup> Part of this Diary has recently been published, but its editor has omitted passages deemed too intimate for publication. The printed book does not therefore give much indication of the confessions made by Tolstoy to his fiancée.



Countess not only loved Tolstoy dearly as a husband, but had the deepest admiration for him as a writer. He on his side, during the next fifteen years of his life, often said that he found in family life the completest happiness, and in Sophia Andreyevna not only a loving wife and an excellent mother for their children, but an admirable assistant in his literary work, in which, owing to his unmethodical habits, her service as an intelligent and devoted amanuensis was invaluable. The Countess acquired remarkable skill in deciphering his often extremely illegible handwriting, and was sometimes able to guess in an extraordinary way the meaning of his hasty jottings and incomplete sentences.

Soon after his marriage he wrote to Fet :

‘ I am writing from the country, and while I write, from upstairs where she is talking to my brother, I hear the voice of my wife, whom I love more than the whole world. I have lived to the age of thirty-four without knowing that it was possible to love and to be so happy. When I am more tranquil I will write you a long letter. I should not say “ more tranquil,” for I am now more tranquil and clear than I have ever been, but I should say, “ When I am accustomed to it.” At present I have a constant feeling of having stolen an undeserved, illicit, and not-for-me-intended happiness. There . . . she is coming ! I hear her, and it is so good ! . . . And why do such good people as you and, most wonderful of all, such a being as my wife, love me ? ’

One drawback to their almost complete happiness lay in the fact that Tolstoy seldom enjoyed any long periods of uninterrupted good health. In his correspondence we find frequent references to indisposition, as imprudence in early manhood and the hardships of army life had permanently injured his digestion.



Before he had been married a fortnight, an event occurred which might have led to very disagreeable consequences. The Minister of the Interior drew the attention of the Minister of Education to the harmful nature of the *Yasnaya Polyana* magazine; but the decision in the matter fortunately lay with the latter Minister, whose opinion was favourable to Tolstoy, and no action was taken. The discouragements he had met with and the new interests resulting from his marriage induced Tolstoy however to close his school and also to discontinue his educational magazine. The school was however restarted in a modified form later on.

Shortly before the birth of his eldest son, Sergey, he wrote to Fet of his wife's condition and activities: 'Invisible efforts—and even visible ones—are now going on; and, moreover, I am again up to my ears in farming. So is Sonya. We have no steward; we have assistants for field-work and building; but she, single-handed, attends to the office and the cash. I have the bees, the sheep, a new orchard, and the distillery. It all progresses little by little, though of course badly compared with our ideal.'

He was now fairly launched on the life he was destined to lead for fifteen years: a quiet, country life, occupied with family joys and cares. These years followed one another with so little change that the story of a decade and a half can almost be compressed into a sentence. Children came in quick succession, two great novels and a school *Reader* were produced, a large orchard planted with apple-trees, the *Yasnaya Polyana* property improved, and new estates purchased east of the Volga.

In his *Confession*, Tolstoy says of the years now under review:

‘Returning from abroad I married. The new conditions of happy family life completely diverted me from all search for the general meaning of life. My whole life centred in my family, wife and children, and in care to increase our means of livelihood. My striving after self-perfection and progress was now replaced by the effort to secure the best possible conditions for myself and my family.’ Again, writing of this middle period of his life, he says :

‘Then came a third period (from my marriage to my spiritual rebirth) which from a worldly point of view may be called moral : that is to say, I lived a correct honest family life, not indulging in any vices condemned by public opinion, but with interests wholly limited to selfish cares for my family, for the increase of our property, the acquisition of literary success, and all kinds of pleasure.’

In twenty-six years the Countess bore her husband thirteen children, of whom five died in childhood and eight grew up to be adults.

The most reliable account of Tolstoy at the time he was writing his great novels is that given by his brother-in-law, S. A. Behrs, who writes : ‘Tolstoy was always fond of children, and liked to have them around him. He easily won their confidence, and seemed to have the key to their hearts. He could divine a child’s thought with the skill of a trained educationist. Gifted by nature with rare tact and delicacy, he was extremely gentle in his bearing and conduct to others. I never heard him scold a servant. Yet they all had the greatest respect for him, were fond of him, and seemed even to fear him. Nor, with all his zeal for sport, have I ever seen him whip a dog or beat his horse.’

No violence or severe punishment was inflicted

on the children, and none but their parents might award the punishments that were administered. Toys were not allowed in the nursery, but much liberty was given to the children. They were always eager to go for walks with their father, to answer his call to practise Swedish gymnastics, and to be on his side in any game he taught them. In winter they skated a good deal ; but clearing the snow off the pond under his leadership was an even greater pleasure than skating itself.

In the evening he was fond of playing duets with his sister, who spent much time at Yasnaya. He used to find it hard to keep up with her in playing long pieces with which he was not quite familiar, but when in difficulties he would say something to make her laugh and so cause her to play slower. If he did not succeed by this ruse, he would sometimes stop and solemnly take off one of his boots, as though that must infallibly help him out of the difficulty ; and he would then recommence, with the remark, ' Now it will go all right ! ' We hear, too, of his playing the guitar and singing passionate love-songs ; and he was always strongly moved by vocal or instrumental music well performed.

Among the favourite amusements at Yasnaya, one, that he called ' the Numidian Cavalry,' evoked the noisiest applause. He would unexpectedly spring up from his place and, raising one arm in the air with its hand hanging quite loose from the wrist, would run lightly through the rooms. All the children, and sometimes the grown-ups also, would follow his example with the same suddenness.

Tolstoy developed a strong dislike of leaving home even for a few days. When it was absolutely necessary for him to go to Moscow he would grumble at his hard

fate, and those who accompanied him noticed that town life depressed him, and made him fidgety and irritable.

He furnished an example of the fact that men of artistic temperament are often untidy. He simply could not and therefore did not try to keep his things in order.

A marked characteristic of his was the ardent and whole-hearted way in which he threw himself into whatever occupation he took up. On this point Prince D. D. Obolensky says: 'I have seen Count Tolstoy in all phases of his creative activity. . . . Whatever his occupation, he firmly believed in the value of what he was doing, and was always fully absorbed by it. I remember him as a man of the world, and have met him at balls, and I remember a remark he once made, "See what poetry there is in women's ball-dresses, what elegance, how much thought, how much charm even in the flowers pinned to the dresses!" I remember him as an ardent sportsman, as a beekeeper, as a gardener; I remember his enthusiasm for farming, for tree-planting, fruit-culture, horse-breeding, and much else.'

His management of property was characteristically personal. He never took shares in any joint-stock company, but bought land, bred cattle and horses of good quality, planted a quantity of trees, and in general acquired property he could manage himself, or over which he had full control.

His literary work did not prevent him from paying keen attention to farming. He had at one time 300 pigs, paired off in separate sties which were kept extremely clean, 80 cows, 500 good sheep and very many fowls, and used to send excellent butter to Moscow, where it sold at a good price.

Sportsman and agriculturist himself, he maintained that sportsmen and agriculturists alone know Nature. To quote Behrs again :

‘ No bad weather was allowed to interfere with his daily walk. He could put up with loss of appetite, but he could never go a day without a sharp walk in the open air. If his literary work chanced to go badly, or if he wished to throw off the effects of any unpleasantness, a long walk was his sovereign remedy. He could walk a whole day without fatigue, and we have frequently ridden together for ten or twelve hours.’

All luxury was distasteful to him ; and much that ordinary people regard as common conveniences seemed to him harmful indulgence, bad for the souls and bodies of men.

In contrast to his former habit he dressed very simply, and when at home never wore starched shirts or tailor-made clothes, but adapted to his own requirements the ordinary Russian blouse, as was at that time a not uncommon practice among Russian country gentlemen. His outdoor winter dress was also an adaptation of the peasant’s coat and sheepskin overcoat.



## CHAPTER V

### THE GREAT NOVELS

ON settling down to a new life after his marriage Tolstoy formed the plan of writing a great novel of the time of the Napoleonic wars and the invasion of Russia by the French in 1812. This was the magnificent background of *War and Peace*, a work which was conceived on a gigantic scale and proved a splendid success.

In November 1864 he wrote to Fet : ' I am in the dumps and am writing nothing, but work painfully. You cannot imagine how hard I find the preliminary work of ploughing deep the field in which I must sow. To consider and reconsider all that may happen to all the future characters in the very large work I am preparing, and to weigh millions of possible combinations in order to select from among them a millionth part, is terribly difficult.'

Later he again wrote : ' This autumn I have written a good deal of my novel. *Ars longa, vita brevis* comes to my mind every day. If one could but find time to accomplish a hundredth part of what one understands—but only a thousandth part gets done ! Nevertheless the consciousness that *I can* is what brings happiness to men of our sort. You know that feeling, and I experience it with particular force this year.'

On his recovery from a hunting accident he wrote



to Fet : ' Shall I tell you something surprising about myself ? When the horse threw me and broke my arm, and I came to after fainting, I said to myself : " I am an author." In a few days the first part of *War and Peace* will appear. Please write to me your opinion of it in detail. I value your opinion and that of a man whom I dislike the more, the more I grow up—Turgenev. He will understand. All I have printed hitherto I consider but a trial of my pen ; what I am now printing, though it pleases me better than my former work, still seems weak—as an introduction must be. But what follows will be—tremendous !!! '

This masterpiece was begun when he was thirty-six years of age, and kept him busy for five years. It contains some 600,000 words and was originally published in six volumes. For the serial rights he received what was considered the very high rate of Rs. 500 (then about £75) per printed sheet of 16 pages, containing 33,000 letters ; that being the usual Russian way of reckoning an author's remuneration.

During the first fifteen years of his married life his financial position improved rapidly as a result of his earnings from literary work and successful farming. He had also, before his marriage, inherited a small estate from his eldest brother.

Novel-writing is an art in which the Russians have excelled. The predominant opinion among them is that Tolstoy is their greatest writer, and *War and Peace* his greatest work. It is maturer than his earlier tales, and was composed when he felt more contented with himself and with life than he had formerly done and was more tolerant towards the world than he became in later years.

Though highly original Tolstoy stands, none the less,

in the line of succession of great Russian writers which began with Pushkin, was continued by Gogol, and was carried on by Tolstoy's great contemporaries, Turgenev and Dostoyevsky.

In no other country or age has the influence of literary art, and especially of novelists and their critics, been as great as it was in Russia during the nineteenth century. Political activity was prohibited, and the intelligence of the nation was not greatly absorbed in commerce. Most people lived in the country and had ample leisure during the long winter months. The Church gave little guidance and the people were as sheep lacking a shepherd, but they were highly sensitive to art, and the great literary artists became the real leaders of the spiritual life of the nation.

*War and Peace* tells of two families, the Rostovs and the Bolkonskys. Many characters in the book are drawn from Tolstoy's father's family, represented by the Rostovs, and from his mother's, represented by the Bolkonskys. The mighty drama of the Napoleonic advance from 1805 to 1812 comes into the novel in so far as it affects the members of those families. But Tolstoy is not content merely to tell their story, he also introduces a whole philosophy of history.

His theory is that the 'great' men of history count for very little. They are the figure-heads of vessels driven by mighty forces.

Tolstoy told me he considered the chief defect of the book, besides its too great length, to be the intrusion of this long philosophic argument. He also told me that in writing *War and Peace* and *Anna Karenina* his aim was simply to amuse his readers. We are bound to accept his statement; but one has only to

read those books to see that through them Tolstoy's ardent nature found vent, with all his likes and dislikes, strivings and yearnings, hopes and fears.

Tolstoy's works have from the first interested Russia, and now interest the world, because in greater measure than any of his predecessors he possessed the capacity to feel intensely, note accurately, and think deeply. His novels help to evolve order out of life's chaos owing to his love of what is good, his marvellous power of depiction and the scientific accuracy of observation, which never allows him to take liberties with his characters or with events in order to make out a case for the side with which he sympathizes. He makes no pretence of standing aloof and severing his art from his life. His works are so truthful that the characters seem to have an independent existence of their own. They speak for themselves, and at times, like Balaam, bless when they were apparently intended to curse.

In this book he describes Russia as it existed under Alexander I, and still existed when he himself was young, with extraordinary vividness, and makes us feel at home in a country and an age not our own.

It is not possible to do justice to the book in a brief summary. It has many characters so distinctly drawn that we come to know them better than we know our personal acquaintances. It treats of life's deepest experiences, and to read it with the care it deserves helps one to know life better and to see it more sanely and seriously. Some people consider novel-reading a waste of time: but there are hardly any books (at any rate hardly any big books) better worth reading than Tolstoy's novels.

It has been said that great literature is the by-product of a strenuous life. In Tolstoy's case it

certainly was so. Had he not struggled and failed and striven and suffered, had he not exposed his own life to danger in war, and had he not loved, feared and achieved, he could never have produced that book.<sup>1</sup>

Tolstoy was by no means indifferent to literary success. His brother-in-law, speaking of him at this stage, tells us that 'in my presence he has confessed to being both proud and vain. He was a rampant aristocrat, and though he always loved the country folk, he loved the aristocracy still more. To the middle class he was antipathetic. When after his failures in early life he became widely famous as a writer, he used to admit that it gave him great pleasure and intense happiness. In his own words, he was pleased to feel that he was both a writer and a noble.

'Sometimes he would ironically remark that, though he had not earned a Generalship in the artillery, he had at any rate won his Generalship in literature.'

Before *War and Peace* was finished the Countess had borne four children—nursing them herself, as, with two unavoidable exceptions, she did all her subsequent children. Her willingness to do her duty in this respect was exceptional among women of her class, for the employment of wet-nurses was common in Russia. Up to the age of ten the children were taught Russian and music by the Countess, and she even found time to make their clothes herself till they reached that age. Besides all this, she copied out the whole of *War and Peace* by hand some seven times over as her husband revised it again and again during its composition.

<sup>1</sup> A good translation (Mrs. Constance Garnett's) of *War and Peace* is issued by Heinemann in a library edition. A pocket edition by another hand is in course of preparation for the World's Classics.



With Tolstoy the children had arithmetic lessons and read French from illustrated volumes of Jules Verne.

Though he had so completely conquered the laziness of which he accused himself in early manhood as to have become a regular, indefatigable and extremely hard worker, yet after the completion of his gigantic novel he felt the need of recuperation, and in the summer of 1869 he wrote to Fet: 'It is now my dearest time: I neither write nor think, but feel happily stupid,' and he adds that he goes out shooting snipe and has killed eight at an outing.

During the winter of 1870-71 Tolstoy devoted himself to the study of Greek, a language he had never learned. Fet was so sure the attempt would fail, that he announced his readiness to sacrifice his own skin for parchment for Tolstoy's diploma of proficiency should the latter qualify himself to receive it.

In December Tolstoy wrote him: 'I received your letter a week ago, but have not answered because from morning to night I am learning Greek. . . . I am writing nothing, only learning; and . . . your skin (to be used as parchment for my diploma) is in some danger. Improbable and astonishing as it may seem, I have read Xenophon, and can now read him at sight. For Homer, a dictionary and some effort is still necessary. I eagerly await an opportunity to show this new trick to some one. . . . I have become convinced that of all that human language has produced truly and simply beautiful, I knew nothing . . . and I have ceased to write, and never more will write, wordy rubbish. . . . You may triumph: without a knowledge of Greek, there is no culture.'

We are assured that he learnt the language and read Herodotus within three months.

Tolstoy felt the charm of the literary art of the ancient world ; and so keenly did he enter into the minds of those of whom he read, and so different to his own was the Greek outlook on life, that the contradiction produced in him a feeling of melancholy and apathy which even affected his health.

To beguile him from this absorption, his wife at first urged him to take up some fresh literary work ; and finally, becoming seriously alarmed for his health, induced him to go eastward for a kumys cure. During his stay beyond the Volga, in the Province of Samara, he purchased an estate there.

On returning from Samara improved in health, he turned once more to matters educational, especially to the need of good primers for beginners. The task to which he devoted his powers, now at their zenith, was the production of a *Reader* as simple and perfect in form and subject-matter as possible.

Immediately after New Year, 1872, he also restarted the Yasnaya Polyana school, in which he, the Countess, and their seven-year-old daughter Tatiana used to teach the peasant children.

Among the stories he wrote for the *Reader* were *A Prisoner in the Caucasus*, *God sees the Truth* and *The Bear Hunt* (all included in *Twenty-three Tales*). He was particularly pleased by the great popularity these stories obtained.

Though he suffered much from ill-health he spared no pains to make his *Reader* as perfect as possible, and in March 1872 he wrote to Fet : ' How I wish to see you ! but I cannot come, I am still ill. . . . My ABC Book gives me no peace for any other occupation. The printing advances on the feet of a tortoise, the deuce knows when it will be finished, and I am still adding, omitting, and altering. What will come



of it I know not ; but I have put my whole soul into it.'

Tolstoy explained that he wished to make a profit on the work, and he certainly did so ; yet in later years he spoke as though any admixture of mercenary motive is fatal to literary work ; a tenet at variance with his own experience, for no one could have laboured more conscientiously or successfully than he did on the task he now had in hand.

As soon as the book was so far advanced that he thought he could entrust the remaining proof-reading to a friend, he went for another much-needed change to his Samara estate, where he had to arrange for building and for breaking up the virgin soil. So concerned was he however about the fate of the *Reader* that he cut short his stay, and soon returned to Yasnaya to look after it.

The *Reader* was published in November 1872. At first it sold slowly and was attacked in some of the papers. Tolstoy however was not discouraged and held to the belief that he had 'erected a monument'—a conviction amply justified by the ultimate success of the work. He had indeed produced a reading-book far superior to anything previously existing in Russia, and probably unmatched in any language. An enormous number of copies have been sold, and, with certain modifications, it continues to circulate throughout Russia to the present day.

When Tolstoy had at last got the *Reader* off his hands, he prepared to write a large novel dealing with the period of Peter the Great, but after some months of strenuous preparation he felt so strong a dislike of that Tsar that he definitely abandoned the project. A little later, when he was in his forty-fifth year, without any special preparation

he began his second great novel, *Anna Karenina* (pronounced Karénina, the stress being on the second syllable). A volume of Pushkin happened one day to be lying open at the first page of a story beginning with the words, 'The guests had arrived at the country house.' Noticing this, Tolstoy remarked that these words, plunging at once into the midst of things, are a model of how a story ought to begin. Some one laughingly suggested that he should so begin a novel ; and he at once started on *Anna Karenina*, the second sentence of which is, 'All was in confusion in the Oblonskys' house.'

The year before, a lady, named Anna, who lived with a neighbouring squire near Yasnaya, had committed suicide through jealousy, by throwing herself under a train. Tolstoy had been present at the post-mortem, and the case suggested to him the theme for the book.

Outside Russia, *Anna Karenina* is perhaps more popular than *War and Peace*. The former, though long, is not nearly so long as the latter, and in arrangement *Anna Karenina* is more like the novels we are accustomed to.

It deals with the passionate love of a beautiful and attractive married woman for a wealthy and aristocratic officer ; and in marked contrast with this pair there is the love of Kitty and Levin. Though Levin is depicted as a very simple fellow in order to obtain a more effective contrast between him and the representatives of high life in Moscow and Petersburg, he, to a greater degree than any of the author's other characters, represents Tolstoy himself.

*Anna Karenina* had the advantage of being introduced to the English public by Matthew Arnold in an essay which is one of the best ever written about Tolstoy.

Arnold makes a grave error however by saying that Tolstoy 'earns his bread by the labour of his own hands.' Tolstoy never did that and never claimed to have done it ; though the statement has been often very confidently repeated.

Of *Anna Karenina* Arnold says that : ' Though our Russian novelist deals abundantly with criminal passion and with adultery, he does not seem to feel himself owing any service to the goddess Lubricity, or bound to put in touches at this goddess's dictation . . . nothing is of a nature to trouble the senses, or to please those who wish their senses troubled. This taint is wholly absent.'

Arnold, it is true, is rather shocked that Anna should yield so easily to the persuasions of her lover. He is sure that she ought to have resisted. But here we come to a matter on which many Russians disapprove of Tolstoy on quite the opposite ground. Kropotkin, in his interesting work *Russian Literature*, has stated their case very clearly, and this is the substance of what he says :

' *Anna Karenina* produced in Russia an impression which brought Tolstoy congratulations from the reactionary camp and a very cool reception from the advanced portion of society. The fact is that the question of marriage, and of the separation of husband and wife, has been most earnestly debated in Russia by the best men and women, both in literature and in life. Levity towards marriage such as is continually unveiled in the Divorce Courts was decidedly condemned, as also was any form of deceit such as supplies the subject for countless French novels and plays. But after levity and deceit had been condemned, the right of a new love—appearing perhaps after years of happy married life—was seriously considered.

Chernyshevsky's novel, *What is to be Done?* may be taken as the best expression of the opinions on marriage which became current among the better portion of the young generation. Once married, it was said, don't take lightly to love affairs or flirtation. Not every fit of passion deserves the name of a new love; and what is called love is often merely temporary desire. Even if it be real, before it has grown deep there is generally time to reflect on the consequences that would result were it allowed to grow. But when all is said and done, there are cases when a new love does come, and comes almost inevitably. . . . In such cases separation not only becomes inevitable, but is often to the interest of both. It would be better for both to live through the suffering a separation involves (honest natures are improved by such suffering) than to spoil the entire subsequent life of one—or both in most cases—and to face the evil consequences which living together under such circumstances would be sure to produce on the children. That at any rate was the conclusion to which, both in literature and in life, the best portion of Russian society came.'

And into the society Kropotkin describes in the above statement, came Tolstoy with *Anna Karenina*. The epigraph of the book is 'Vengeance is mine, I will repay,' and death by suicide is the fate of poor Anna, who was married young to an old and unattractive man, and who had never known love until she met Vronsky. Deceit was not in her nature. 'To maintain a conventional marriage would not have made her husband or child happier. Separation and a new life with Vronsky, who seriously loved her, was the only possible outcome. At any rate,' continues Kropotkin, 'if the story of *Anna Karenina* had to end in tragedy, it was not in consequence of an act



of supreme justice. The artistic genius of Tolstoy, honest here as everywhere, itself indicated the real cause, in the inconsistency of Vronsky and Anna. After leaving her husband and defying public opinion—that is, as Tolstoy shows, the opinion of women not honest enough to have a right to a voice in the matter—neither she nor Vronsky had the courage to break away from that society, the futility of which Tolstoy describes so exquisitely. Instead of that, when Anna returns with Vronsky to Petersburg, their chief pre-occupation is, how Betsy and other such women will receive her if she reappears among them? And it was the opinion of the Betsies—surely not Superhuman Justice—which brought Anna to suicide.’

Whether Matthew Arnold’s view or Kropotkin’s be accepted, Tolstoy at any rate shows us Anna’s charm: ‘her large, fresh, rich, generous, delightful nature which keeps our sympathy.’ And after all, Tolstoy’s view of marriage sanctity is a very old and a very widely held one, and it is well to have that side of the case put strongly and persuasively. If ultimately the idea that two uncongenial people ought to live out their lives together because they have married has to be abandoned, let the best advocates at least be heard in its defence.

*Anna Karenina* contains passages—the ball, the officers’ steeplechase, the mowing, the death of Levin’s brother, and others—which for artistic beauty are unsurpassed and perhaps unsurpassable. It also towards the end contains, in admirably concise form, much of what Tolstoy said later in his *Confession* of his quest for the meaning of life, his thoughts of suicide, and how he learnt from a talk with a peasant that man should live ‘for his soul and for God.’

W. D. Howells, who stood sponsor for Tolstoy in

America as Matthew Arnold did in England, says: 'It is Tolstoy's humanity which is the grace beyond the reach of art in his imaginative work. It does not reach merely the poor and suffering; it extends to the prosperous and the proud, and does not deny itself to the guilty. . . . Often in Tolstoy's ethics I feel a hardness, almost an arrogance (the word says too much); but in his æsthetics I have never felt this. He has transmuted the atmosphere of a realm hitherto supposed unmoral into the very air of heaven. If Tolstoy is the greatest imaginative writer who ever lived, it is because, beyond all others, he has written in the spirit of kindness, and not denied his own personal complicity with his art. . . . He comes nearer unriddling life for us than any other writer.'

The serial publication of *Anna Karenina* was begun in a Moscow magazine early in 1875, but not completed till April 1877. Of the English versions of *Anna Karenina* Mrs. Garnett's has till now been recognized as the best, but its position is challenged by a new version now appearing in the World's Classics series.

While the book was being written and published Tolstoy's life was externally peaceful and prosperous, but his mind was much disturbed and he was approaching the great crisis of his life.

In May 1873 he and his family went for a three months' visit to Samara, where he had recently purchased more land. It was fortunate that some one who had the ear of the public happened to be there that year, for the crops in the whole neighbourhood failed utterly and a famine ensued. Prompted by the Countess, Tolstoy issued an appeal for help. His aunt in Petersburg interested the Empress, who at



once contributed to the Famine Fund. Her example was largely followed, and about Rs. 2,000,000 (then equal to £270,000) was subscribed during 1873-74.

Before 1873 closed, the angel of death had crossed Tolstoy's threshold for the first time in his married life. In November he wrote to Fet: 'We are in trouble. Peter, our youngest, fell ill of croup and died in two days. It is the first death in our family in eleven years, and my wife feels it very deeply.'

During the whole of 1874 Tolstoy made strenuous efforts to get his system of education more generally adopted. Despite his dislike of public speaking he addressed a meeting of the Moscow Society of Literacy on the best way to teach children to read; and he published a long article 'On the Education of the People' in the *Fatherland Journal*, which aroused heated controversy in the press.

He also projected a 'University in bark shoes,' that is to say a very cheap training college for peasant teachers; and to try to secure a grant for this purpose, he stood for, and was elected to, the Tula Zemstvo (County Council) and was appointed to serve on its Education Committee. Greatly to his disgust however that body preferred to spend its available money on a monument to Catherine the Great, instead of on his project, thereby intensifying the distrust of representative institutions he already felt and soon afterwards expressed in part vi. of *Anna Karenina*.

Meanwhile life and death pursued their course. In April 1874 his seventh child was born, and in June death took his dearly-loved Aunty Tatiana, to whose good influence through life he owed so much.

Tolstoy says: 'When already beginning to grow feeble, having waited her opportunity, one day when I was in her room she said to us, turning away (I saw



TOLSTOY IN 1873

*From the painting by Kramskoy*



that she was ready to cry), "Look here, *mes chers amis*, my room is a good one and you will want it. If I die in it," and her voice trembled, "the recollection will be unpleasant for you, so move me somewhere else that I may not die here." Such she always was from my earliest childhood before I was able to understand her goodness.'

Referring to the love for his father which had played so large a part in her life, he adds: 'She died peacefully, gradually falling asleep; and died as she desired, not in the room that had been hers, lest it should be spoilt for us. She died recognizing hardly any one. But me she always recognized, smiling and lighting up as an electric lamp does when one touches the switch, and sometimes she moved her lips trying to pronounce the name, "Nicholas": thus in death completely and inseparably uniting me with him she had loved all her life.'

In March 1875 Tolstoy wrote again to Fet:

'We have one grief after another: you and Marya Petrovna (Fet's wife) will certainly be sorry for us, especially for Sonya. . . . Our youngest son, ten months old, fell ill three weeks ago with the dreadful disease called water-on-the-brain, and after three weeks' terrible torture died three days ago, and we have buried him to-day. I feel it hard through my wife; but for her, who was herself nursing him, it is very hard.'

In April he wrote to Fet: 'You are ill and think of death, and I am alive and do not cease thinking of, and preparing for, the same thing. . . . Much that I have thought, I have tried to express in the last published chapter of *Anna Karenina*' (part v. chap. xx.). That chapter, telling of the death of Levin's brother, is based on the death of Tolstoy's own third

brother Dmitry ; and it may here be mentioned that many characters in *Anna Karenina* are drawn more or less closely from life.

In May he again wrote to Fet : ' As you and I resemble one another, you must know the condition in which one feels oneself to be, now a God from whom nothing is hid, and now stupider than a horse. In that state I am at present. So do not be exacting.'

Though he had often expressed disapproval of reading newspapers, and had lived detached from politics, he now began to feel keenly interested in a question connected with Russia's foreign policy.

The insurrection in Bulgaria in May 1876 had been quickly suppressed by the Turks, the Bashi-Bazouks committing unspeakable atrocities on the defenceless inhabitants. In July, Serbia and Montenegro declared war against Turkey, but, in spite of help rendered them by numerous Russian volunteers, they were soon crushed, and would have been completely at the mercy of the Turks had not Russia demanded an armistice which Turkey conceded. Alexander II then pressed for reforms in Turkey, which were not granted, and war ensued in April 1877.

The Russo-Turkish imbroglio led, early that year, to a quarrel between Tolstoy and his publisher Katkov, who was ardent for the liberation of the Slavs from Turkish tyranny, laudatory of those who had volunteered for the war, and eager for the aggrandizement of Russia. Tolstoy had his doubts about the heroic and self-sacrificing character of the volunteers and about the purity of the patriotism of the press, and expressed these doubts very plainly in the last part of *Anna Karenina*. Katkov returned some of the MS. with numerous corrections and a letter saying that he could not print it unless his corrections were accepted.



Tolstoy was furious at this interference, and sent a sharp reply which resulted in a rupture. Tolstoy therefore issued the last part of *Anna Karenina* (which contains a remarkable forecast of his later teaching) separately, besides issuing the whole work in book form as usual. Katkov had to wind up the serial publication as best he could by giving a brief summary of the concluding chapters.

A letter to Fet, in April, gives an inkling of what was going on in Tolstoy's mind at this time: 'I value every letter of yours, especially such as this last! You would hardly believe how pleased I am at what you write, "On the existence of the Deity." I agree with it all, and should like to say much about it, but cannot in a letter, and am too busy. It is the first time you have spoken to me about the Deity—God. And I have long been thinking unceasingly about that chief problem. Do not say that one cannot think about it! One not only can, but must! In all ages the best, the real people, have thought about it. And if we cannot think of it as they did, we must find out how to. Have you read *Les Pensées de Pascal*—i.e. have you read it recently with a mature headpiece? When (which God grant) you come to see me, we will talk of many things, and I will give you that book.'

He was greatly interested in a visit paid him about this time by an itinerant story-teller who was expert in folk-lore and wielded beautifully the simple language of the people, which Tolstoy loved. He took down some of this traveller's tales, and from them subsequently worked up into literary form *What Men Live By*, *The Three Hermits* (both included in *Twenty-three Tales*) and some others. The root-idea of *What Men Live By* (that of an angel sent by God to do penance on earth for a well-intentioned act of disobedience) is

one of the most widely disseminated of the world's legends, and appears in the literature of many ages and many lands.

Another letter to Fet, in April 1878, also shows the direction in which Tolstoy's mind was working. He says: 'Were you and I to be pounded together in a mortar and moulded into two people, we should make a capital pair. But at present you are so attached to the things of this life that, should they some day fail you, it will go hard with you; while I am so indifferent to them that life becomes uninteresting and I depress others by an eternal pouring "from void into vacuum"! Do not suppose that I have gone mad; I am merely out of sorts, but hope you will "love me though I be black."' '

The prolonged mental struggle through which Tolstoy passed during the years 1874-78 was evident to those about him, at least from 1876 onward. Not merely did he go regularly to church and shut himself up in his study morning and evening to pray, but his former high spirits subsided, and his desire to become meek and humble was plainly noticeable. One result of his altered attitude was that he felt keenly that it was wrong to have an enemy. Accordingly he wrote to Turgenev to that effect, and held out to him the right hand of friendship.

To this Turgenev replied very promptly and cordially, and on Tolstoy's return, in August, from a stay at his Samara estate, Turgenev visited him at Yasnaya, and came there again in September. One sees, however, by a letter to Fet in September 1878, that Tolstoy still found himself unable to be quite intimate with his fellow-novelist.

'Turgenev on his return journey came to see us and was glad to receive your letter. He is still the

same, and we know the degree of nearness possible between us.'

A little later he wrote: 'Yesterday I received a letter from Turgenev and, do you know, I have decided that it will be better to keep further away from him and from sin.' [A common Russian saying.] 'He is an unpleasant sort of quarrel-maker.'

Turgenev evidently retained a more agreeable impression of his visit to Yasnaya, for he wrote: 'I was very glad to come into touch with Tolstoy, and I spent three pleasant days with him; his whole family are very sympathetic and his wife is charming. He has grown very quiet and has matured. His name begins to gain European celebrity: we Russians have long known that he has no rivals.'

In October, Tolstoy had written to Fet apologizing for not having written sooner: 'Though it is always superfluous for apologizers to explain their reasons, I will yet write mine, because they are true and explain my condition. For a month past, if not more, I have been living amid the fumes not of external occurrences (on the contrary we are by ourselves, living quietly) but of what is going on within me: something I know not how to name. I go out shooting, read, reply to questions put to me, eat and sleep, but can do nothing, not even write letters, a score of which have collected.'

All this was indicative of the mental disturbance caused by the ripening of the convictions expressed in his *Confession*, dealt with in the next chapter.

Tolstoy of the later phase differed from the earlier Tolstoy; but the later Tolstoy grew out of the earlier as the branches of a tree grow from its trunk. The difference lay chiefly in this: that, from about the year 1878, Tolstoy became sure of himself, formulated his outlook on life, and proceeded to examine and pass

judgment on all the main phases of human thought and activity. His work was sometimes hasty and often harsh; he painted in black and white subjects really composed of all shades of colours—but what other man has even attempted so to examine, elucidate, portray and tell the frank truth about all the greatest problems of life and death?

No such combination of intellectual and artistic force has in our times provoked the attention of mankind. No one has so stimulated thought, or so successfully challenged established opinions. Tolstoy has altered the outlook on life of many men in many lands, and caused not a few to alter not their ideas merely but the settled habits and customs of their lives. Only those who neither know nor understand him, question his sincerity. To analyse his opinions and disentangle what in them is true from what is false, is a difficult task, but one which, in as far as the limits of space will allow, will be attempted in the following chapters.

Tolstoy's marvellous artistic power, his sincerity and the love that is so strong a feature of his work, have often been dwelt upon; but what really gives him supreme importance as a literary force is the *union* of these things, artistic capacity, sincerity and love, with an extraordinary power of *intellect*. It is not given to any man to solve all the problems of life, but no one in modern times has made so bold and interesting an attempt to do so as Tolstoy, or has striven so hard to make his solutions plain to every child of man.



## CHAPTER VI

### 'CONFESSION'

**B**EFORE dealing with his *Confession*, which marks a new departure in Tolstoy's life, it will be well to note two tendencies which influenced him. One was the religious life of the people, with its mediæval traditions. He had only to go a short walk from his house to reach the high-road where pilgrims going afoot to the shrines of the saints could always be met ; and he had many conversations with them at the rest-house they frequented. Among them were men to whom nothing in this world was as precious as obedience to the will of God ; and Tolstoy observed these people closely and felt that they were near to his soul.

On the other hand he was influenced by the remarkable movement then beginning to make itself felt in Russia, which took as its watchword the motto, 'Towards the People.'

In 1875 public attention was aroused by the trial of a group of Socialist propagandists ; and the trial of 'The Moscow Fifty,' in March 1877, revealed the fact that a number of girls of wealthy families were voluntarily leading the life of factory hands, working fourteen hours a day in overcrowded factories, that they might come into touch with working people, to teach them and to carry on social and political propaganda among them.



These and other indications showed that an increasing number of Russians felt that the existing order of society resulted in the mass of the people having to live in conditions of blighting ignorance and grinding poverty while a parasitic minority living in plenty, and sometimes in extravagant superfluity, rendered no service at all equivalent to the cost of their keep. The mere statement, that those who had received an education thanks to the work of the masses owe service to the masses in return, sufficed to rouse to action many of the young men and women of that day. They left their wealthy homes, lived the simplest lives, ran fearful risks, and according to their lights (sometimes not very clear ones) devoted themselves to the service of the people.

While this was going on around him, such a man as Tolstoy could not be at rest.

It was through V. C. Alexeyev, who was mathematical tutor to his eldest son, Sergey, that Tolstoy came in contact with the Socialist movement. Tolstoy respected Alexeyev as a man who tried to shape his life in accord with his beliefs.

Alexeyev says : ' Sometimes we started a conversation on economic and social themes. I had a copy of the Gospels, left from the days of my Socialist propaganda among the people. Passages relating to social questions were underlined in it, and I often pointed these out to Tolstoy. The work constantly going on within him gave him no peace, and at last brought on a crisis.'

The state of Russian life was indeed such that men of sensitive consciences could not be at rest (as indeed when and where in the wide world can they ?), and Tolstoy was one in whose soul the struggle was sure to be fought out most strenuously.

Mention of the days when he was approaching this crisis and writing his *Confession* is made in a letter from his wife to her sister :

‘ 8 November 1878. — Lyovochka has now quite settled down to his writing. His eyes are fixed and strange, he hardly talks at all, has quite ceased to belong to this world, and is positively incapable of thinking about everyday matters.’

What is unusual about Tolstoy’s conversion is that it came so late in life and so gradually, and that the intellect played so large a part in it.

In his *Confession*, chiefly written in 1879 when he was fifty-one, he says : ‘ Five years ago something very strange began to happen to me. At first I experienced moments of perplexity and arrest of life, as though I did not know how to live or what to do ; and I felt lost and became dejected.’ These moments of perplexity were always expressed by the questions : “ What is it for ? What does it lead to ? ” . . . These questions began to repeat themselves frequently, and more and more insistently to demand replies. They seemed stupid, simple, childish questions ; but as soon as I tried to solve them, I became convinced that they are not childish and stupid, but that they are the most important and deepest of life’s questions.

‘ Before occupying myself with my Samara estate, the education of my son, or the writing of a book, I had to know *why* I was doing it. As long as I did not know why, I could do nothing, and could not live. Amid the thoughts of estate management which greatly occupied me at that time, the question would suddenly occur to me : “ Well, you will have 16,000 acres of land in Samara Government and 300 horses, and what next ? ” . . . And I was quite disconcerted

and did not know what to think. Or, beginning to consider my plans for educating my children, I would say to myself: "What for?" Or when thinking of the fame my works would bring me, I said to myself, "Very well: you will be more famous than Gogol or Pushkin or Shakespeare or Molière, or than all the writers in the world,—and what does it lead to?" And I could find no reply at all. My life came to a standstill. . . . Had a fairy come and offered to fulfil my desires, I should not have known what to ask. . . . The truth seemed to be that life was meaningless. I had, as it were, lived, lived, and walked, walked, till I had come to a precipice and saw clearly that there was nothing ahead of me but destruction. It was impossible to stop, impossible to go back, and impossible to close my eyes or avoid seeing that there was nothing ahead but suffering and real death—complete annihilation.

' It had come to this, that I, a healthy, fortunate man, felt I could no longer live: some irresistible power impelled me to rid myself of life one way or other. I cannot say I *wished* to kill myself. The power which drew me away from life was stronger, fuller and more widespread than any mere wish. . . . And it was then that I, a man favoured by fortune, hid a cord from myself lest I should hang myself from the crosspiece of the partition in my room where I undressed alone every evening. . . .

' And all this befell me at a time when all around me I had what is considered complete good fortune. I was not yet fifty; I had a good wife who loved me and whom I loved, good children, and a large estate, which without much effort on my part improved and increased. I was respected by my relations and acquaintances more than at any previous time. I was



TOLSTOY'S LIBRARY





praised by others, and without much self-deception could consider that my name was famous. And not only was I not insane or mentally unwell, but on the contrary I enjoyed a strength of mind and body such as I have seldom met with among men of my kind : physically I could keep up with the peasants at mowing, and mentally I could work continuously for eight or ten hours without experiencing any ill results from such exertion. . . .

‘ The question which brought me to the verge of suicide was the simplest of questions present in the soul of every man, from the foolish child to the wisest elder : it was a question without answering which one cannot live, as I had found by experience. It was, What will come of what I am doing to-day or shall do to-morrow—What will come of my whole life ?

‘ Where philosophy deals with that essential question, its answer is always one and the same : an answer given by Socrates, Schopenhauer, Solomon, and Buddha.

“ We approach truth only inasmuch as we depart from life,” said Socrates when preparing for death.

‘ And Solomon (or whoever wrote the works attributed to him) says : “ Vanity of vanities, all is vanity. What profit hath man of all his labour under the sun ? . . . Therefore I hated life, because the work that is wrought under the sun is grievous to me ; for all is vanity and vexation of spirit.”

‘ And what these strong minds said, has been said and thought and felt by millions upon millions of people like them. And I thought it and felt it.

‘ I now see that if I did not kill myself, it was due to some dim consciousness of the invalidity of my thoughts. I began to feel, rather than argue, in this way : “ Were there no life, my reason would not

exist; therefore reason is life's son. Life is all. Reason is its fruit, yet reason denies life itself!" I felt that there was something wrong here.

"There is something wrong," said I to myself; but what was wrong I could in no way make out. It was long before the fog began to clear and I began to be able to restate my position.

'My position was terrible. I could find nothing along the path of reasonable knowledge, except a denial of life; and in faith I could find nothing but a denial of reason, still more impossible to me than a denial of life.

'Finally I saw that my mistake lay in ever expecting an examination of finite things to supply a meaning to life. The finite has no ultimate meaning apart from the infinite. The two must be linked together before an answer to life's problems can be reached.

'It had only seemed to me that knowledge gave a definite answer—Schopenhauer's answer: that life has no meaning and is an evil. On examining the matter further, I understood that philosophic knowledge merely asserts that it cannot solve the question, and the solution remains, as far as *it* is concerned, indefinite. And I understood, further, that however unreasonable and monstrous might be the replies given by faith, they had this advantage, that they introduce a relation between the finite and the infinite, without which no reply is possible.

'Faith still remained to me as irrational as it was before, yet I could not but admit that it alone gives mankind a reply to the questions of life: and consequently makes life possible. . . . Faith is the strength of life. If a man lives, he believes in something. If he does not see and recognize the illusory nature of the

finite, then he believes in the finite ; if he understands the illusory nature of the finite, he must believe in the infinite. Without faith he cannot live.

‘ What am I ?—A part of the infinite. In those few words lies the whole problem.

‘ I began dimly to understand that in the replies given by faith is stored up the deepest human wisdom.

‘ I understood this ; but it made matters no better for me. I was now ready to accept any faith if only it did not demand of me a direct denial of reason—which would be a falsehood. And I studied Buddhism and Mohammedanism from books and, most of all, I studied Christianity both from books and from living people. . . .

‘ During that whole year, when I was asking myself almost every moment whether I should not end matters with a noose or a bullet—all that time, beside the course of thought and observation about which I have spoken, my heart was oppressed with a painful feeling which I can only describe as a search for God.’

Tolstoy goes on to explain how impossible he found it to believe in such a God as is presented in the Church creeds, yet how impossible it was for him to live without God. He says : ‘ Not twice or three times, but tens and hundreds of times, I reached a condition first of joy and animation, and then of despair and consciousness of the impossibility of living.

‘ I remember that it was in early spring : I was alone in the wood listening to its sounds. I listened and thought ever of the same thing, as I had constantly done during those last three years. I was again seeking God.

“ Very well, there is no God,” said I to myself ; “ there is no one who is not my imagination but a

reality like my whole life. He does not exist, and no miracles can prove his existence, because the miracles would be my perceptions, besides being irrational." . . .

'But then I turned my gaze upon myself, on what went on within me, and I remembered that I only lived at those times when I believed in God. As it was before, so it was now; I need only be aware of God to live; I need only forget him, or disbelieve in him, and I die. . . . "What more do you seek?" exclaimed a voice within me. "This is he. He is that without which one cannot live. To know God and to live is one and the same thing. God is life. Live seeking God, and then you will not live without God." And more than ever before, all within me and around me lit up, and the light did not again abandon me.'

He tells how the beliefs of the simple peasants attracted him, in spite of an admixture of superstition in their beliefs; and how, on the other hand, intercourse with learned Churchmen or Evangelicals repelled him; yet he fulfilled the rites of the Church and tried to adapt himself to its teaching.

'So I lived for about three years. At first, when I did not understand something, I said, "It is my fault, I am sinful"; but the more I fathomed the truth, the clearer became the line between what I do not understand because I am not able to understand it, and what cannot be understood, but involves lying to oneself.

'In spite of my doubts and sufferings, I still clung to the Orthodox Church. But questions of life arose which had to be decided; and the decision of these questions by the Church contrary to the very bases of the belief by which I lived, obliged me at last to own that communion with Orthodoxy is impossible. These questions were: first the relation of the Orthodox



Eastern Church to other Churches . . . and to the so-called sectarians. At that time, in consequence of my interest in religion, I came into touch with believers of various faiths: Catholics, Protestants, Old-Believers, and others. And I met many men of lofty morals, and truly religious. I wished to be a brother to them. And the teaching which promised to unite all in one faith and love—that very teaching, in the person of its best representatives, told me that these men were all living a lie: that what gave them their power of life is a temptation of the devil; and that we alone possess the only possible truth. . . . And I saw that the Orthodox (though they try to hide this) regard with hostility all who do not express their faith by the same external symbols and words as themselves. . . . And to me, who considered that truth lay in union by love, it became self-evident that the faith was itself destroying what it ought to produce.

‘ The second relation of the Church to a question of life was with regard to war and executions.

‘ At that time Russia was at war. And Russians, in the name of Christian love, began to kill their fellow-men. It was impossible not to think about this, and not to see that killing is an evil, repugnant to the first principles of any faith. Yet they prayed in the churches for the success of our arms, and the teachers of the faith acknowledged killing to be an act resulting from the faith. And besides the murders during the war, I saw, during the disturbances which followed the war, Church dignitaries and teachers and monks who approved of the killing of helpless erring youths. And I took note of all that is done by men who profess Christianity, and I was horrified.

‘ And I ceased to doubt, and became fully convinced



that not all was true in the religion I had joined. Formerly I should have said that it was all false ; but I could not say so now, for I had felt its truth and had lived by it. But I no longer doubted that there is in it much that is false. And though among the peasants there was less admixture of what repelled me, still I saw that in their belief also falsehood is mixed with truth.

‘ But where did the truth and where did the falsehood come from ? Both the falsehood and the truth were contained in the so-called holy tradition and Scriptures. Both the falsehood and the truth had been handed down by what is called the Church. And whether I liked to or not, I was brought to the study and investigation of those writings and traditions—which till now I had been so afraid to investigate.

‘ And I turned to the examination of that theology which I had once rejected with such contempt. . . . I shall not seek the explanation of everything. I know that the explanation of everything, like the commencement of everything, must be concealed in infinity. But I wish to understand in a way which will bring me to what is inevitably inexplicable. I wish to recognize anything that is inexplicable, as being so not because the demands of my reason are wrong (they are right, and apart from them I can understand nothing), but because I recognize the limits of my intellect. I wish to understand in such a way that everything that is inexplicable shall present itself to me as being necessarily inexplicable, and not as being something I am under an arbitrary obligation to believe. I must find what is true and what is false, and must disentangle the one from the other.’

Having reached a fresh understanding of life,

Tolstoy felt, he tells us, as though while walking from home he had suddenly understood that the errand he had started upon was unnecessary, and had turned back. All that had formerly been on his right hand now appeared on his left, and all that had been on his left was now on his right. What he had desired—honour, riches and self-aggrandizement—now seemed evil; while poverty, humility, self-sacrifice and the service of others seemed good.

Those who have followed his earlier career will however find it hard to detect the external signs of so great and sudden a change. No sudden break was apparent in his external life: what followed, evolved from what had gone before, so that it seems less natural to speak of his crossing the Rubicon than of his gradual ascent of a mountain.

In May 1879 we find Tolstoy writing to Fet of the beautiful spring. ‘ It is long since I so enjoyed God’s world as I have done this year. One stands open-mouthed, delighting in it and fearing to move lest one should miss anything.’

In June he set out for Kiev, which with its great catacomb-Monastery is one of the chief places of pilgrimage in Russia. Thousands flock there every year seeking spiritual nourishment.

His journey to Kiev was not however a success, for he found nothing to satisfy him either in the Monastery or in the monks.

On his road home he visited Fet, and after reaching Yasnaya wrote to him, on 13th July 1879:

‘ Do not be vexed with me, dear Afanasy Afanasyevich, for not writing to thank you for the pleasant day I spent at your place, and for not answering your last letter. It is probably true that I was out of spirits while with you (forgive me for it) and I am still not

in good spirits. I am always capricious, self-tormenting, troubled, correcting myself and learning . . . and I cannot refrain from turning myself inside out.

‘ We still have measles in the house. It has picked out half the children already, and we are expecting the rest to take it.’

In July he wrote again in reply to some remonstrance Fet had sent him :

‘ I reject neither real life, nor the labour necessary for its maintenance ; but it seems to me that the greater part of my life and yours is taken up with satisfying not our natural wants, but wants invented by us or artificially inoculated by our education and habitual to us ; and that nine-tenths of the work we devote to satisfying those demands, is idle work. I should very much like to be firmly convinced that I give people more than I take from them ; but as I feel myself much disposed to value my own work high and other people’s work low, I do not hope by simply intensifying my labour and choosing what is most difficult, to assure myself that their account with me does not land them in a loss. (I am sure to tell myself that the work I like is the most necessary and difficult) ; Therefore I wish to take as little from others as possible, and to work as much as possible for the satisfaction of my own needs ; and I think that is the easiest way to avoid making a mistake.’

A month later he writes : ‘ Since Strahov’s visit, we have had guests one after the other : private theatricals, and all the devils let loose. Thirty-four sheets in use for the guests, and thirty people at dinner, and all went off well, and all—including myself—were gay.’

The critic, N. N. Strahov, whom he here mentions, wrote to a friend : ‘ I found Tolstoy in excellent spirits

this time. With what vivacity he is carried away by his ideas ! Only young people seek truth as ardently as he ; and I can say positively that he is now in the very bloom of his strength. He has abandoned all his plans and is writing nothing, but works tremendously. One day he took me with him and showed me one of the things that occupy him. He walks to the high-road (a quarter of a mile from his house), and there at once finds men and women pilgrims. With them he starts conversation, and if he chances upon good specimens and is himself in good form he hears wonderful tales.’

Before the end of that year, Tolstoy had definitely concluded that it was impossible to reconcile the demands of the Church with the demands of his own reason and conscience.

In October he entered the following characteristic passage in his Diary : ‘ There are worldly people, heavy and wingless. Their sphere is down below. There are among them strong ones : Napoleon. They leave terrible traces among men, and cause an uproar, but it is all on the earth. There are those whose wings grow equably and who slowly rise and fly : monks. There are light people, winged, who rise easily from among the crowd and again descend : good idealists. There are strong-winged ones who, drawn by carnal desires, descend among the crowd and break their wings. Such am I. Then they struggle with broken wings, flutter strongly, and fall. If my wings heal, I will fly high. God grant it. . . . There are those who have heavenly wings, and purposely—from love to men—descend to earth (folding their wings) and teach men to fly away. When they are no more needed, they fly away : Christ.’

About this time the Countess wrote to her sister :



‘Lyovochka is always at work, as he expresses it ; but alas ! he is writing some sort of religious discussion. He reads and thinks till his head aches, and all to show how incompatible the Church is with the teaching of the Gospel. Hardly ten people in Russia will be interested in it, but there is nothing to be done. I only wish he would get it done quicker, and that it would pass like an illness ! No one on earth can control him or impose this or that mental work upon him, it is not even in his own power to do so.’

Her letters give us a glimpse of the trouble sure to occur from the close union of two people of strong individuality, one of whom changed his outlook on life and wished to change his way of life accordingly. It was once said that no man should change his opinions after he was married ! The Countess Tolstoy must often have felt inclined to say something of the sort when she saw her husband consumed by a fervent devotion to conclusions not her own, and to which, since they went on continually evolving and developing, it was all the more difficult for her to adjust herself.

She gave birth to a tenth child in December 1879, a boy, christened Michael.

During the first years after their marriage the Tolstoys had not had many visitors, except relations ; but with the growth of the younger generation this altered, and Yasnaya Polyana began to swarm with young people. Tolstoy’s change of outlook on life also made him more accessible to all sorts and conditions of men, though it caused him to reject some acquaintances whom almost any one else would have been glad to know : among others, General Skobelev and the painter, Vereschagin.

Turgenev, who was an ardent admirer of Pushkin, returned from France in 1880 to take part in the cele-



bration of the eightieth anniversary of that poet's birth. Aware of Tolstoy's dislike of jubilees and public celebrations, the Committee requested Turgenev to use his personal influence to persuade Tolstoy to be present at the unveiling of the Pushkin Monument in Moscow ; and with this purpose Turgenev visited Yasnaya the week after Easter. Tolstoy's admiration for Pushkin, whom he regarded as the foremost of Russian writers, and the fact that this was the first time it had been permitted to pay public honour to the memory of a Russian man of letters, led Turgenev to assume that his host would surely agree to take part in the Jubilee. But to Tolstoy the feasting, the expense, the artificiality and the fictitious enthusiasm accompanying such affairs, were profoundly repugnant, and he met the request with a definite refusal.

So great was Turgenev's dismay at Tolstoy's uncompromising reply, that when, shortly afterwards, Dostoyevsky—the third of the trio of great Russian novelists then living—wished to visit Yasnaya, and consulted Turgenev on the matter, the latter spoke of Tolstoy's mood in such a way that Dostoyevsky abandoned his intention, and died a year later without having ever met Tolstoy, to whose *Anna Karenina* he had publicly referred as the most palpable proof Russia could offer to the Western world of her capacity to contribute something great to the solution of the problems that oppress humanity.

From this time onward Turgenev, without ceasing to be interested in Tolstoy personally and while continuing to praise him enthusiastically as a novelist, never missed an opportunity to express his distrust of, and regret concerning, those new interests which were so profoundly stirring the depths of Tolstoy's nature,

and were destined to move the minds of men in many lands far more profoundly than his novels had ever done, but the power and importance of which the elder writer realized as little as a man suffering from colour-blindness realizes the values in a picture.

In a letter to a friend Turgenev wrote: 'It is an unpardonable sin that Leo Tolstoy has stopped writing—he is a man who could be extraordinarily useful, but what can one do with him? He has plunged into mysticism. Such an artist, such first-class talent, we have never had, nor now have, among us. I for instance am considered an artist, but what am I worth compared to him! In contemporary European literature he has no equal. Whatever he takes up, it all becomes alive under his pen. And how wide the sphere of his creative power—it is simply amazing! But what is one to do with him? He has plunged headlong into another sphere: has surrounded himself with Bibles and Gospels in nearly all languages, and has written a whole heap of papers. He has a trunk full of these mystical ethics and of various pseudo-interpretations. He read me some of it which I simply do not understand. . . . I told him, "That was not the real thing"; but he replied: "It is just the real thing." . . . Very probably he will give nothing more to literature, or if he reappears it will be with that trunk. . . . And he has followers: Garshin, for instance, is undoubtedly his follower.'

Tolstoy's artistic nature about this time caused him, as it happened, to hit on the idea of writing short prose-poems. Having composed one, he sent it, signed in the name of an old servant, to a newspaper. The MS. came back 'declined with thanks,' on the ground that its author was 'not yet sufficiently expert in expression'! Resigning himself to his failure,

Tolstoy passed on the idea to Turgenev, and to it we owe the latter's *Poems in Prose*.

A remark at the end of Tolstoy's *Confession*, to the effect that he was setting to work to disentangle the truth from the falsehood he found in the Church teaching, and that this would form the next part of his work, 'which, if any one wants it, will probably some day be printed somewhere,' indicates the difficulty in which he now found himself with reference to the publication of his works. Books calling in question the bases of the Church creeds had no chance of getting published in Russia. Tolstoy was working primarily to clear matters up for himself.

For the present he put aside his practically completed *Confession*, and proceeded to write *A Criticism of Dogmatic Theology*, which was followed in turn by a voluminous *Union and Translation of the Four Gospels*, and a fourth book, *What I Believe* (sometimes called *My Religion*)—the whole series occupying him for several years, almost to the exclusion of other work. It involved a tremendous concentration of effort, with no possibility of pecuniary profit, no apparent chance of permission to publish in Russia, and no definite plan for publication abroad. Were other evidence lacking, this alone would suffice to prove both Tolstoy's sincerity and his sense of the overwhelming importance of the questions with which he was dealing.

While working hard at his books, Tolstoy did not abstain from rendering practical help to the peasantry around him. It was an immense advantage to them to have a man of education and influence to whom they could turn in time of trouble. Much of the help Tolstoy gave was of such an everyday nature that, though it left its trace on the hearts and lives of those

who received it, it is nowhere recorded and now escapes notice. It was always his practice to listen to, and advise, those who came to consult him; and almost every day there were some who came. He wrote for them innumerable petitions, statements and letters of introduction; and no doubt his inveterate dislike of law and jurisprudence largely grew as a result of his experience of the extreme difficulty of obtaining elementary justice for poor, ignorant and oppressed peasants.

*[A new translation of Tolstoy's 'Confession' is announced to appear shortly in the World's Classics series.]*

## CHAPTER VII

### THE CHURCH AND THE GOSPELS

*'I have just read your presentation of my religious views. It is very good. I thank you for it from my soul, and press your hand in friendship.'*—Tolstoy to Aylmer Maude, 16th March 1910.

**T**HE problem before Tolstoy was that of separating what is true from what is false in the teachings of the Church and in the Gospels.

He knew that man needs guidance, but he was too sincere to adopt a creed merely because he wanted one, or to accept anything he saw no sufficient reason to believe. Others have felt the need for religion as keenly, and not a few have shared his courage and truthfulness ; but he alone, in our time, combined this religious spirit and fearless truthfulness with a genius for literary expression which secured the attention of the world. Owing moreover to the personal risk he ran of persecution, his words became heroic deeds causing the blood of those who heard them to flow faster in their veins.

He first carefully examined the dogmas of the Orthodox Russian Church as stated in the Creeds and in Dogmatic Theology. (They do not differ essentially from those of the Catholic or Protestant Churches.)

The conclusion he reluctantly reached was that they, and the whole theology in which they are em-



bedded, are utterly false. The more he looked into the matter, the more shocked was he at the levity with which the Churches have accepted conclusions based on evidence which, he says, will not stand the simplest tests of logic. He found it difficult to understand why the theologians say such strange things, and support their assertions by arguments that are an insult to human intelligence. He tells us that he found himself driven to the conclusion that dogmatic theology endures only because it is screened from exposure by the authority of the Church; and that the Church itself is simply 'Power in the hands of certain men.'

Tolstoy charges the Church with lack of intellectual integrity, and regards it as an obstacle to man's moral progress and to the spread of any right understanding either of life or of religion.

He maintains that though many people credulously accept and repeat the Church dogmas, nobody really believes them, for they mean nothing at all, and statements must have a meaning before they can be really believed. For instance, the statement that some one went up a hill and then rose to heaven and sat down there, may have had a meaning when people lived on a flat earth with a burning hell below and a solid firmament above; but, in accord with our conception of astronomy, if a man began to rise from the top of a hill there is nowhere for him to stop! And if he tried to sit down, he would have nothing to sit on and would tumble back again. For people, who believe in the solar system, to say they believe in the Ascension is, he said, merely to talk nonsense.

Faith is a virtue; but to be faithful to a belief, you must have one; and a real belief is not attained by credulity (which is a vice) but by vigorous mental effort.

In his direct way, Tolstoy took theology at its face value, as a statement of essential truths, and he asked whether in its plain sense, as it is given to and accepted by children and simple people, it is really true. Having come to the conclusion that it is not, he denounced it as a fraud which it is the duty of every honest man to expose and a disgrace for any decent man to trade in.

Had his nature not been profoundly religious he might have stopped there and contented himself with ridiculing and denouncing the superstitions by which mankind are hoodwinked ; but in fact he hastened on to proclaim the power and value of the teaching of Jesus even more ardently than he condemned the Church.

His large work, *A Criticism of Dogmatic Theology*, was completed about the year 1880, but was only printed eleven years later, when a Russian edition was published in Geneva. In that book Tolstoy tells us that, far from coinciding with Christ's teaching, the Church's dogmas are designed to divert men's minds from the things Jesus cared for and spoke most about. It is abundantly plain from the Gospels that he constantly spoke of love and pity, and of man's duty to man and to that ' Father in heaven ' who sends the Spirit of Truth to be our Comforter, but that he never talked about the Fall of Adam, or the scheme of Redemption, or said that God was a Trinity, or asserted that God was his Father except in a sense in which He may be our Father too ; nor did he state that the Holy Spirit was the third person of a Trinity. It is true, he often identified himself with his heavenly Father, as when, in John's Gospel, he said, ' I and the Father are one,' and ' Before Abraham was, I am ' ; but he wished us also to be identified with Him : ' I am in my Father, and ye in me, and I in you ' ; and again, ' That

they may be one, even as we are one ; I in them, and they in me.' He also taught his disciples to pray to ' Our Father ' ; and, making a clear distinction between himself and God, said : ' My God, my God, why hast Thou forsaken me ? '

The Gospels often attribute to Jesus language evidently not used literally, as when he says he is ' the door,' or ' the vine,' and it lies with the reader to take his words reasonably or unreasonably. This applies equally to the statement that he was the ' Son of God.' To make this mean that God was his father in the same way that Mary was his mother, would be absurd ; yet, as soon as we admit that God was his Father in a mystic sense, the scheme of Redemption ceases to have any concrete meaning.

It must strike any one who reads the Gospels with an open mind and compares them with the Church Creeds, that if Jesus knew that God would punish mankind until atonement was made for Adam's sin, and if Jesus approved of this and made it the chief aim of his life and death to appease such a God ; and if, moreover, he knew that men's eternal salvation depends on these things and on our believing rightly about them, it is singularly unfortunate that he omitted to mention the matter, and left us to pick it up from obscure remarks made, years later, by St. Paul—whom he never met during his life on earth.

The following is a summary of Tolstoy's views, as expressed in 1880-84 :

Each one of us has a reason and a conscience that come to us from somewhere : we did not make them ourselves. They oblige us to differentiate between good and evil ; we *must* approve of some things and disapprove of others. In this respect we are all members of one family and sons of one Father. Dor-

mant or active in each of us there is a higher and better nature : a spiritual, divine nature. If we open our hearts and minds, we can to some extent distinguish good from evil in relation to our own conduct : ' the law is very nigh unto you, in your mouth and in your heart.' The purpose of our life on earth should be to serve—not our lower, animal nature, but that Power to which our higher nature recognizes its kinship. Jesus identifies himself with his higher nature, speaks of himself and of us as Sons of the Father, and bids us be perfect as our Father in heaven is perfect.

This then is the answer to the question : What is the meaning and purpose of life ? There is a Power enabling us to discern what is good ; we are in touch with it, our reason and conscience flow from it, and the purpose of our conscious life is to do its will : that is, to do good.

The Gospels apply this teaching to practical life in the Five Commandments of Christ, an acceptance of which, or even a *comprehension of and an attempt to follow* which, would alter the whole course of men's lives in our society.

1. ' Ye have heard that it was said to them of old time, Thou shalt not kill ; and whosoever shall kill shall be in danger of the judgment ; but I say unto you, that every one who is angry with his brother shall be in danger of the judgment.'

Let it be mentioned in passing that in the Russian version, as in our Authorized Version, the words, '*without a cause,*' occur after the word 'angry.' This makes nonsense of the passage, for no one ever is angry without supposing that he has some cause ! Comparing various Greek texts, Tolstoy found that those words are an interpolation (the correction is also made in our Revised Version), and he found other passages



in which the current translations obscure Christ's teaching ; as, for instance, the popular libel which represents him as having flogged people in the Temple with a scourge. Not one Gospel, in the Revised Version, says that he struck any one !

The first great guiding rule for a Christian then is : *Do not be angry.*

Some people will say, ' We do not accept Christ's authority, so why should we not be angry ? '

But test it any way you like : by experience, by the advice of other great teachers, or by the example of the best men and women in their best moods, and you will find that the advice is good.

But one may say finally, ' I cannot help being angry, it is my nature ; I am made so.' Very well : there is no danger of your not doing what you must do ; but religion and philosophy exist to help us to think and feel rightly, and to guide us in as far as our nature allows us to be guided. If you can't abstain from anger altogether, *abstain from it as much as you can.*

2. ' Ye have heard that it was said, Thou shalt not commit adultery : but I say unto you, that every one that looketh on a woman to lust after her hath committed adultery with her already in his heart.'

This second great rule of conduct is : *Do not lust.*

Being animals most of us probably cannot help lusting, but the fact that *we* are imperfect does not prevent the advice from being good ; so if you cannot be perfectly pure, lust as little as you can.

3. ' Again, ye have heard that it was said to them of old time, Thou shalt not forswear thyself, but shalt perform unto the Lord thine oaths : but I say unto



you, Swear not at all. . . . But let your speech be, Yea, yea ; Nay, nay.'

'How absurd!' says some one. 'Here are five great commandments to guide us in life: the first is, "Don't be angry"; the second is, "Don't lust." These are really broad, sweeping rules of conduct; but the third is, "Don't say damn"! What is the particular harm, or importance, of using a few swear-words?'

But that is not the meaning of the commandment. It, too, is a broad, sweeping rule, and means: *Do not give away the control of your future actions.* You have a reason and a conscience to guide you, but if you set them aside and swear allegiance elsewhere—to Tsar, Emperor, Kaiser, King, Queen, President or General—they may some day tell you to commit the most awful crimes; perhaps even to kill your fellow-men. What are you going to do then? Break your oath? Or commit an act you would not have committed had you not first sworn an oath?

The present Emperor of Germany, Wilhelm II, once addressed some naval recruits just after they had taken the oath of allegiance to him. (It had been administered by a salaried servant of the Prince of Peace, on the book which says, 'Swear not at all.')

Wilhelm II reminded them that they had taken the oath, and that if he called them out to shoot their own fathers they must now obey.

The whole organized and premeditated system of wholesale murder called war, says Tolstoy, is based and built up in all lands on this practice of inducing people to entrust their consciences to the keeping of others.

4. 'Ye have heard that it was said, An eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth: but I say unto you,

*Resist not him that is evil* ; but whosoever smiteth thee on thy right cheek, turn to him the other also.'

That means, said Tolstoy, do not use physical violence against men who act in a way you disapprove of. Ultimately, taken in conjunction with other commandments, it means much more than that. There are two opposite ways of trying to promote the triumph of good over evil. One way is that followed by Buddha and Jesus and other of the best men the world has known. It is, to seek to see the truth of things clearly, to speak it out fearlessly, and to endeavour to act up to it, leaving it to influence others as the rain and sunshine act upon the plants. The influence of men who behave in that way spreads from land to land and from age to age. But there is another plan, much more often tried, which consists in making up one's mind what *other people* should do and then using physical violence to make them do it. People who act like that influence others as long as they can reach them, and even longer ; but the effect that lives after them and spreads furthest, is a bad one, inflaming men's hearts with anger and malice. These two lines of conduct are contrary the one to the other, for you cannot persuade a man while he thinks you wish to hit or coerce him.

This Fourth Commandment, as Tolstoy understood it, is precise and definite and leads to extremely far-reaching conclusions. The words which follow : ' If any man would go to law with thee, and take away thy coat, let him have thy cloke also. . . . Give to him that asketh thee, and from him that would borrow of thee turn not thou away,' involve, he says, a complete condemnation of all legal proceedings in which force is actually or implicitly employed to oblige any of those concerned (whether as principals or witnesses)

to be present and take part. This teaching involves nothing less than the entire abolition of all compulsory legislation, Law Courts, police and prisons, as well as of all forcible restraint of man by man. (The right or wrong of using physical force to restrain human beings is the crux of the matter, and it is a point I shall deal with later.)

The last of these Five Commandments is the most sweeping of all :

5. 'Ye have heard that it was said, Thou shalt love thy neighbour and hate thine enemy ; but I say unto you, Love your enemies . . . that ye may be sons of your Father which is in heaven : for He maketh His sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sendeth rain on the just and the unjust. For if ye love them that love you . . . what do ye more than others ? Do not even the Gentiles [foreigners, Germans, etc.] the same ? Ye therefore shall be perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect.'

The meaning of these Five Commandments—backed as they are by the example of Jesus and the drift and substance of his most emphatic teaching—is too plain, Tolstoy says, to be misunderstood : and it is becoming more and more difficult for the commentators and expositors to obscure it. What Jesus meant us to do, the direction in which he pointed us and the example he set us, are unmistakable.

One great superiority of Tolstoy's interpretation over the Orthodox lies in the fact that his statement (whether it be a right or wrong presentation of the mind of Jesus) means something clear and definite, and links religion closely to daily life.

He discriminated between what we know and what we do not know, and made no assertions about the

personality of God, or the creation of the world. Like Socrates, faced by the necessity of supposing either that we live in a moral chaos where nothing is right or wrong, or in a moral order to which we can in some measure conform, he chose the latter alternative and became assured by experience that he had chosen right. By arriving at the conclusion that we are parts of a moral universe, and that only in so far as we discern that order and adjust ourselves to it has life any meaning and purpose not defeated by death,—Tolstoy reached the ultimate root of religion. Through strife and suffering to have found it by his own effort, and to have proclaimed it in the teeth of those who denounced him as heretic and atheist, as well as of those who sneered at him as a superstitious dotard, is an achievement entitling him to rank among the prophets.

He saw clearly that we cannot make the precise statements of the old theology without landing ourselves in inextricable confusion ; for, as J. S. Mill said, it is incredible that an all-powerful and all-good God can have created a world in which evil exists. Yet we believe that evil does exist and that it is our duty to help to get rid of it.

Only by confining ourselves, as mathematicians do, to what is ' necessary and sufficient,' and by refraining from precise and definite statements concerning things we do not really know, can we get an intellectually honest religion. That there is a moral law, with which our natures can be brought at least partly into accord, is not just a thing to be credulously accepted, but is a matter of experience ; and no fact in history is more obvious than that those who have most widely, profoundly and enduringly influenced the minds and hearts of men have firmly believed that they were co-operating with forces beyond the ken of our five senses.



In the early 'eighties, in Russia—that land of strange contradictions—beside the dominant official Church a rampant Materialism prevailed, and many men were fully persuaded that Science was about to reveal the origin of life and to explain the soul of man by the integrations and disintegrations of atoms. Under these circumstances it was as difficult for the views Tolstoy announced to obtain a hearing from the arrogant worshippers in the temples of Science as from the scandalized followers of Mother Church.

That marks the greatness of his service. No progress was possible without emancipation from the petrified ecclesiasticism that masqueraded as religion ; and for any spiritual progress it was necessary that those intoxicated by the successes achieved by biological science should learn that we cannot obtain moral guidance for a race endowed with reason and conscience, by studying species comparatively destitute of the one and of the other. Almost alone, Tolstoy maintained the need of religion while unflinchingly denouncing its existing forms, and sought to destroy the Church in order to save religion.

He ranked the Old Testament with the Scriptures of other nations ; that is to say, he regarded it as religious literature of varying quality, containing some of the highest literary art the world has produced, but much also that is crude, primitive and immoral. In the New Testament, he disliked and disapproved of much in the Epistles of St. Paul, whom he accused of having given a false bias to Christianity. Paul's mind was of an administrative, organizing type, foreign and repugnant to Tolstoy's anarchistic nature, which instinctively resented anything that, aiming at practical results, tolerates imperfect institutions.

The Gospels he regarded as by far the most im-



portant Scriptures, and above all he valued the words of Jesus. The parables (except one or two obscure ones) he held to be exquisite works of religious art, and the Sermon on the Mount an expression of sacred and eternal truth; but he unhesitatingly rejected anything that he could not understand, or that was repugnant to his reason or conscience.

Regarding a future life, Tolstoy's views changed later. In the early 'eighties he saw no reason for believing in a life after death; but subsequently, as a result of having transferred his interest from personal matters to 'the service of God,' that is to say to matters of universal interest, the consciousness that his most real 'self' was part and parcel of the Infinite grew so strong that it appeared to him inconceivable that it should cease at the death of his body. But, carefully observing the distinction between what we know and what merely seems plausible or possible, he refrained from definite assertions as to the kind of existence that may succeed the death of our bodies. Whether there be a personal immortality, whether reincarnation awaits us, or what other experience the future may have for various types of men—he held to be beyond our ken, nor did he think it important that we should know these things at present. We can best prepare for whatever the future may have in store, by helping to establish the Kingdom of God on earth, here and now.

He was not interested in Spiritualism, nor even in Psychical Research. Of the former he spoke scornfully, holding that mankind, having made a useful discrimination between matter and spirit, should not obliterate it. He maintained that the attempt to investigate the spirit-world on the physical plane shows a confusion of thought.

In treating of the Gospel miracles, Tolstoy was interested only in what moral they convey, for he felt that if one sees a man walking on the water one may be perplexed, but not therefore assured that he is going to speak the truth. Ability to walk on the water is a physical matter, whereas truth-telling is spiritual.

He told the story of the Feeding of the Five Thousand somewhat as follows :

A popular preacher went out into the country, and many people flocked to hear him. Baskets are mentioned in the story, and it does not seem reasonable to suppose that the people took *empty* baskets with them. When meal-time came, the preacher (whose teaching was of love and service to one's neighbour) arranged the people in groups of fifty, and set a practical example by distributing, not to his own group but to others, the few loaves and fishes his small party had brought. Following as this did upon his teaching, it was imitated by the rest ; with the result that none of the five thousand went hungry, and twelve basketsful of scraps were gathered up after all had eaten.

The moral of the story, read in this way, is obvious ; whereas, if we suppose that Jesus miraculously multiplied loaves and fishes, his example is one we cannot imitate.

For the most part, Tolstoy regarded the miracles as mentally indigestible and omitted them from the translation he made of the *Four Gospels*.

As to Christ's Five Commandments and the taking of oaths, Tolstoy did not mention one very plausible explanation of what was in the mind of Jesus when he said, ' Neither shalt thou swear by thy head, for thou canst not make one hair white or black.' Oaths were originally based on the idea that man could call

on the Higher Powers to destroy him for speaking falsely. As soon as he no longer believed in such divine intervention, and did not think that, if he staked his head on the truth of what he said, the gods would enforce the penalty, the oath lost its meaning and became objectionable.

The desirability of remaining free to do from day to day what seems to us right at the time, unbound by any agreement with our fellow-men, is again a point in Tolstoy's teaching that raises problems of great complexity. It is true, as he said, that much evil is done in the world, not because men wish to do it but because they are bound by conditions of service they have accepted. But where Tolstoy erred, it seems to me, was in assuming that things would go better than they do at present if every one refused to be bound by oath or agreement (for he sometimes spread the doctrine out so that it condemned *any definite arrangement* among men as to their future work or future actions).

The Tolstoyan conception of duty is individualistic, and the clash of moral conviction between Tolstoy and, let us say, Gladstone—who represented in this matter a social frame of mind—arises over the question whether it is not sometimes right to act, not as one would if matters lay solely between oneself and God, but in the way likely best to promote unity and co-operation with one's fellows, and therefore ultimately to forward the establishment of the kingdom of heaven.

The following words of Gladstone's show my meaning: 'For years and years, well into advanced middle life, I seem to have considered actions simply as they were in themselves, and did not take into account the way in which they would be taken and

understood by others. I did not perceive that their natural and probable effect upon minds other than my own formed part of the considerations determining the propriety of each act in itself, and not unfrequently—at any rate in public life—supplied the decisive criterion to determine what ought and what ought not to be done.’

Tolstoy would have us regard only our duty to our conscience and to God. He assures us that if each man will do that, we shall think and act in unison, and with the best results for ourselves, our neighbours, our country, and the whole of mankind.

The principle which lies at the root of his Non-Resistant doctrine, namely the non-use of physical force, will be dealt with separately, later on. Here I will only say that, however true it may be that the *lessening* use of physical force in government, in prisons, in schools, and in homes, is a sign of moral progress—there is no such clear moral distinction as he supposed between the use of physical and mental violence. An impulsive blow may sometimes cause less anguish and imply less venom than a malevolent reproach.

Tolstoy is too rigid and too definite in these matters, and it is not fair to assert that Jesus meant so much more than he said. ‘Sweet reasonableness’ has been rightly predicated of him, as he is depicted in the Gospels; but it belongs to that spirit to be aware that human nature and human affairs are complex and difficult, needing constant care and much careful weighing. Convenient as it would be to have a few stark and rigid rules as criteria for human conduct, yet to frame such rules and to deduce extremely far-reaching conclusions from them indicates a misapprehension of the real nature of things, and savours



more of the spirit of some fierce Old Testament prophet than of him who would not break a bruised reed nor quench the smoking flax. The tests of conduct are not really clear or obvious.

Nevertheless, the governments, laws and customs mankind has as yet evolved are so defective that the onslaught of one who regarded them as fit only for destruction may and does contain much that is worthy of careful attention.

His *Union and Translation of the Four Gospels* was written immediately after the completion of his *Criticism of Dogmatic Theology*, and like that work was not printed till several years later, at Geneva.

The order of the chapters and verses of the various Gospels he arranged in his own way, omitting anything he did not understand or disapproved of. The result is a striking and consistent narrative, representing the personality and teaching of Jesus as Tolstoy believed them to have been.

I once mentioned to Tolstoy a charge that has been brought against him, to the effect that in his translation of the Gospels he takes unjustifiable liberties. He replied that he had studied Greek very seriously, and while doing the work had consulted first-rate scholars; but he added that he had long ceased to attach the importance he formerly did to verbal niceties, and he admitted that in his anxiety to counteract the bias he detected in the Orthodox Slavonic and Russian translations, he had sometimes strained the meaning in a contrary direction. He compared his task to that of a man who has to demagnetize a steel bar by exposing it to an opposite influence.

At the period we have reached, early in the 'eighties,



Tolstoy regarded the teaching of Jesus as unique and far above all other human wisdom. The force of many passages in Tolstoy's writings rests on citations of 'the very words of Christ himself'; and he drew vast deductions from the precise phraseology of certain texts, and the exact etymology and context of certain Greek words. He told me that his opinion on this matter changed very gradually. Chiefly by becoming better acquainted with the Eastern scriptures (especially those of India and China) he ultimately reached the conclusion that what is vital lies at the root of all the great religions, which are only separated and divided by superstitious accretions. He still believed that the Gospels contain essential truth, and insisted on his own interpretation of the teachings of Jesus as being in the main correct, but he came to attach less and less importance to Christ's historic existence and to the exact phraseology and actual words of the Gospels.

How far he ultimately went in this direction is shown in a letter to a friend, written about the year 1900, after reading Professor Verus's *Vergleichende Uebersicht der vier Evangelien*. In this letter Tolstoy says: 'In this book it is very well argued (the probability is as strong *against* as *for*) that Christ never existed. The acceptance of this supposition or probability is like the destruction of the last outwork exposed to the enemy's attack, in order that the fortress (the moral teaching of goodness, which flows not from any one source in time or space, but from the whole spiritual life of humanity in its entirety) may remain impregnable.'

To any one fresh from reading Tolstoy's works of 1880-85, this may come with rather a shock; but it does not imply the least weakening of his faith in

the reality of things unseen or in the importance of things spiritual.

A matter that all his readers must notice is the stress he lays on the importance of manual labour ; and on the moral duty of *doing* as contrasted with merely talking or writing. Yet we have his unstinted and enthusiastic laudation of the Sermon on the Mount, which after all was *talk*, and talk preceded by forty days in the wilderness without any labour to produce those necessaries which Tolstoy is so greatly concerned about. Christ's sermon was, no doubt, worth incalculably more than the tables and benches he might have made ; but by that admission we reduce Tolstoy's contention from the realm of the absolute to that of the comparative, which after all is perhaps its proper place.

From the two large works of which I have spoken, some smaller ones sprang, including *The Gospel in Brief*. Another work written in 1884, which has had a large circulation in many languages and gives the gist of the faith Tolstoy then held, is *What I Believe*. It is very readable, and contains interesting autobiographical touches. [It is announced in the World's Classics series.] In substance, it is largely a recapitulation of what he had said in his *Four Gospels*.

To sum up my own appreciation of Tolstoy's work on religion, I would say that he clears the ground admirably of old superstitions, and keeps always in view the essential root of religion : the consciousness of how purposeless human life is apart from dependence on, and co-operation with, a Something greater than ourselves that makes for righteousness. But, like other ardent men bent on furthering the spiritual welfare of mankind, he sets up superstitions of his own in place of those he has overthrown. His super-

stitutions were the 'principles' of Non-Resistance, No Government, No Human Law, and No Property.

A great achievement of his was the way he succeeded in turning their own guns upon his opponents. His indictment of those who neglect to use the reason God has given them, and credulously accept and repeat dogmas they have not tried to verify, is as impressive and convincing as any indictment the ecclesiastics ever levelled against heretics. Unfortunately, he did not stop there, but employed the goad of moral invective to drive people to accept his own views.

The skill with which, starting from the words of Christ, 'Resist not him that is evil,' he framed a complete Christian-anarchist theory, is wonderful. If one grants him his premises (which is just what one should not do) the whole process of deduction is irresistibly logical and (for good or evil) the conclusions are of the utmost importance.

I do not wish to close this chapter on a note of disagreement, and will therefore pass to a matter which is of interest to an enormous number of men.

Tolstoy prayed regularly and ardently, but he did not believe in a personal God—that is to say, he was not prepared to make definite statements on a matter he could not verify—and he disapproved of all petitions to the Deity for material advantages or even for such more subtle gains as peace of mind or soul. He said that there are two kinds of prayer: the 'continual prayer' which consists in reminding oneself of the religious truths one has already grasped and of striving to live up to the best one has perceived, and the 'occasional prayer' achieved most often in moments of solitude, when one feels drawn nearer to God and penetrates deeper than before into the spiritual nature

of things. Owing to the limitations of human thought and language, however, he found that in practice he used a more personal note in his prayers than philosophically he was inclined to defend; and that such prayers helped him greatly.

Tolstoy did not at this time foresee one very important consequence of the task he had set himself. The Russians were then still generally devoted to 'the Tsar, the Faith and the Fatherland.' That trinity was interdependent. The Tsar appointed the Head of the Holy Synod, whose duty it was to see that the Church upheld the Throne. The Tsars had always been the centre to which the nation rallied for defence against foreign foes. It was impossible for Russia to be defeated without the Tsar's prestige suffering, or for the Tsar to be discredited without the fabric of the Empire being endangered. It followed (though it was several years before Tolstoy denounced patriotism, and still longer before he denounced the Tsar) that from the moment he attacked the Church he laid his axe to the root of a tree that was of enormous importance to the whole social edifice, and prepared the ground for a Revolution, which, when it came, took forms he would have found abhorrent.

## CHAPTER VIII

### TRANSITION AND THE PROBLEM OF POVERTY

**T**OLSTOY'S new ideas diverted his attention completely from his former occupations. His affairs fell into disorder, his stewards took advantage of his preoccupation, and the total revenue from Yasnaya Polyana and his other estates (the capital value of which amounted altogether to not less than £50,000 or £60,000) shrank to some £500 a year: a sum quite insufficient to meet the expenses of his large and growing family, the children's education, and hospitality to visitors. The responsibility of managing the estates devolved on the Countess, who besides these cares was now troubled about her husband's health.

In February 1881 she wrote to her sister: 'Lyovochka has quite overworked himself. His head is always aching, but he cannot tear himself away.'

On 1st March 1881 Alexander II was assassinated in Petersburg by agents of the Revolutionary Executive Committee. The action was abhorrent to Tolstoy: but he was so troubled by the thought of the impending execution of five of the conspirators that he wrote to the Emperor, Alexander III, appealing to him to pardon them. The letter ended as follows: 'One word of forgiveness and Christian love, spoken and



carried out from the height of the throne, and the path of Christian rule which is before you waiting to be trod can destroy the evil which is corroding Russia. As wax before the fire, all Revolutionary struggles will melt away before the human Tsar who fulfils the law of Christ.'

The Tsar received the letter, and his remark upon it (which was informally conveyed to Tolstoy) was that he would have pardoned the conspirators had the attack been directed against himself, but did not consider that he had a right to pardon his father's murderers.

Tolstoy's ardent faith in his new views brought him into many conflicts. By natural temperament he was strenuous: he always expressed himself emphatically, and his new views obliged him to disapprove of the ordinary conduct and occupations of his fellows; yet it was part of his religion to live in amity with all men, to give no offence, and to be humble and forgiving. The conflict between his desire to propagate his faith and his wish not to offend others was fierce, and even in private life he was torn by diverging influences.

In his Diary, in the staccato style there adopted, he notes in May 1881: 'One's family is one's flesh. To abandon one's family, is the second temptation: to kill oneself. But do not yield to the third temptation. [To fall down and worship the devil.] Serve not the family, but the one God. One's family is the indicator of the place one must occupy on the economic ladder. It is one's flesh; as a weak stomach needs light food, so a pampered family needs more than a family accustomed to privations.'

Another entry indicates the kind of controversy he often had with his friends:

'29 May.—Talk with Fet and my wife. "The

Christian teaching is not practicable." 'Then it is stupid?' "No, but not practicable." 'But have you tried to practise it?' "No, but it is not practicable."'

The cordial intimacy that had existed between Fet and Tolstoy was waning, and from this time forth they drifted more and more widely apart. The Christian teaching had brought, if not a sword, at least estrangement. In a life singularly successful, noble and useful, which, as Kropotkin well says, made Tolstoy 'the most touchingly loved man in the world,' there was this tragedy: that his zeal for the Gospel he was convinced would save the world, alienated him from friends, brought discord into his family life, strained his relations with his wife, and long left him spiritually alone.

In June 1881 he set out on foot, accompanied by his man-servant, on a pilgrimage to the Opta Monastery, which lies about 135 miles from Yasnaya. At night the travellers put up at any hut they chanced upon whose owner would take them in.

Tolstoy greatly valued such experiences, and wrote to his wife: 'You cannot imagine how new, important, and useful for the soul (for one's view of life) it is to see how God's world lives: the real great world, not the one we have arranged for ourselves and out of which we do not emerge even when we travel round the world.'

After his return home, his Diary shows how keenly he felt the contrast between his family's way of life and his own aspirations. In June he noted:

'We had an immense dinner with champagne. The two Tanyas [his sister-in-law and daughter] were dressed up. Girdles costing five roubles on each of the children. While we were still at dinner, a cart was already starting for the picnic, and passed among the peasant carts that were carrying people tortured by overwork.'

‘ I went to them—but had not the strength to speak out.’

‘ 6 July.—Talk with X. An economic Revolution not only may, but *must*, come. It is wonderful it has not come already.’

At this time he wrote *What Men Live By* (in *Twenty-three Tales*), the precursor of a long series of admirably simple and beautiful stories intended primarily for peasants and children, but which have become popular among all classes and in all languages. Of these Carmen Sylva, the late Queen of Rumania, wrote :

‘ Of all the works this great man and artist has written, his short stories have made the strongest impression upon me. I regard them as the most perfect tales ever written. In these popular stories, thought of the highest purity reaches us, which to my mind is far more eloquent than the subtlest style. . . . It surprises me that people speak more of the so-called greater works of Tolstoy than of these little gems, which are quite unique. If he had written nothing but these short stories, he would still rank among the greatest men of the world.’

In July, from his Samara estate, he wrote to his wife : ‘ Harvest prospects are excellent. What would be sad, if we could not give at least some help, is that there are so many poor in the villages ; and it is a timid poverty, unaware of itself.’

The Countess replied : ‘ Let the management of the estate go on as has been arranged. I do not want anything altered. There may be losses—we have learnt to be accustomed to them ; but even if there are large profits, the money will reach neither me nor the children if it is given away. At any rate you know my opinion about helping the poor. We cannot feed thousands of Samara and other poor inhabitants, but if one

sees and knows that so-and-so is poor, and has no corn or horse or cow or hut, etc., one must give all that at once, and one cannot refrain from giving, because one feels sorry for them, and because it ought to be done.'

The problem of poverty is a heart-breaking affair, and obviously too large to be cured by any individual's strength or means; but to shut one's eyes to it is to blind oneself to the most urgent of social problems, and Tolstoy was feeling more and more concerned about it.

Before his return to Yasnaya, feeling how heavy a burden he had allowed to fall upon his wife, who was expecting her eleventh child that autumn, he wrote:

'You will be going to Moscow to-day. You would not believe how troubled I am at the thought that you may be overtaxing your strength, and how I repent of having given you little or no help.

'In this respect the kumys has done good: it has brought me down from the point of view from which, carried away by my work, I involuntarily regarded everything. I now see things differently. I still have the same thoughts and feelings, but am cured of the delusion that others can and should see everything as I do. I am much to blame towards you, darling; unconsciously, involuntarily, as you know: but still none the less to blame.

'My excuse is that in order to work with the intensity with which I worked, and to get something done, one has to forget all else. And I forgot you too much, and now repent. For heaven's sake and our love's sake, take care of yourself! Put off as much as you can till my return; I will gladly do everything, and will not do it badly, for I will take pains.'

The Countess was delighted by the news that he was thinking of writing a story, and she wrote:

'What a joyful feeling seized me when I read that

you again wished to write something poetic. You have felt what I have long waited and longed for. In that lies salvation and joy ; that will again unite us, and will console you, and will light up your life. That is real work, for which you were created, and outside that sphere there is no peace for your soul. I know you cannot force yourself, but God grant you may cherish that gleam, and that that divine spark in you may again kindle and spread. The thought enchants me.'

He reached home just when there were many visitors and great preparations for amateur theatricals. This jarred on him, and he noted in his Diary : ' 18 August. —A Play. Empty people. The days, 19, 20, and 21 must be struck out of my life.'

His eldest son, Sergey, was now eighteen, and about to enter the University. Educational opportunities were also needed for the other children. Moreover, the eldest daughter, Tanya, was seventeen. In the ordinary course of events it was time for her to be brought out into Society ; and it had been decided long before that the family should move to Moscow that winter. In September 1881 they did so, and settled in a hired house.

Greatly as Tolstoy now disliked the idea, he had to consent to it ; nor, till he was in Moscow, did he fully realize how painful town life would be to him after so many years spent in the country.

Early in October he noted in his Diary : ' A month has passed. The most tormenting in my life. The move to Moscow. All are busy arranging ; when will they begin to live ? All of it, not for the sake of living, but to be like other people. Unfortunates ! Life is lacking.'

About the same time the Countess wrote to her



sister : ' To-morrow we shall have been here a month, and I have not written a word to any one. For the first fortnight I cried every day, because Lyovochka not only became depressed but even fell into a kind of desperate apathy. He did not sleep and did not eat, and sometimes literally wept ; and I really thought I should go mad. You would be surprised to see how I have altered and how thin I have grown. Afterwards he went to the Province of Tver and visited his old acquaintances, and then went to a village to see some sectarian Christian, and when he returned he was less in the dumps. . . . He walks across the Maidens' Field and crosses the river to the Sparrow Hills, and there he saws and splits wood with some peasants. It is good for his health and cheers him up.'

The sectarian Christian referred to was Sutaev, a very remarkable peasant, whose thoughts and feelings were strikingly in accord with Tolstoy's.

Sutaev and his sons had abandoned their occupation as tombstone-makers in Petersburg because they considered competitive business immoral. In accord with the Gospel injunction, they forgave their debtors, that is to say did not collect the money due from their customers. His sons, on conscientious grounds, refused to serve in the army and suffered imprisonment for so doing. His whole family rejected the Church, disapproved of the State, and organized a Commune among themselves.

Tolstoy was charmed by Sutaev, and by the simplicity and seriousness with which he faced the great problems of life.

At the conclusion of Tolstoy's visit, Sutaev harnessed a horse to drive his guest to his destination. On the way the two men became so absorbed in discussing the imminence of the Kingdom of God, that they did not

notice what the horse was doing, and their cart upset into a ravine! Fortunately neither of them was seriously hurt.

The influence Sutaev had on Tolstoy depended largely on the fact that the peasant had altered his life in accordance with his religious perception, which was just what Tolstoy himself was finding it extremely difficult to do.

The great problem that now occupied Tolstoy was the economic question: Why are the many poor?

He was sure that it is man's business to establish the Kingdom of God on earth. He was convinced that by conforming to the laws of God, miserable lives can be made happy. In Moscow he was horrified to see how wretchedly a large part of the population lived, and how callous the religious, learned, wealthy and governing classes were to the fate of the unfortunates.

With characteristic impetuosity, self-reliance and energy, he seized the occasion presented by the approaching decennial Census, in January 1882, to issue an ardent appeal. The 2000 students and others about to engage in conducting the Census should, he said, take that opportunity to become acquainted with the destitute in Moscow, to whom organized relief should be extended. *What Then Must We Do?*—which is autobiographically of great value and is also in some respects the most moving book Tolstoy ever wrote—grew out of this appeal and out of the experience that followed it.

In his article *On the Census in Moscow*, after speaking of the duty of helping the hungry, the ill-clad, and the homeless, Tolstoy added: 'What is wonderful is, not that this has not yet been done, but *that these things exist side by side with our superfluity of leisure and wealth, and that we can live quietly, knowing of them!*'

His practical proposals were quite inadequate to meet the evil, but those words strike a profoundly true note.

*What Then Must We Do?* is a work from which it is hard to refrain from quoting many pages, but I can here only give a few sentences, and must refer those who want more details to the book itself or to my *Life of Tolstoy*, where it is fully dealt with.

After describing his visit to a free night-lodging-house, Tolstoy says that : ' At the sight of the hunger, cold, and degradation of thousands of people, I understood . . . that the existence of tens of thousands of such people in Moscow—while I and thousands of others over-eat ourselves with beef-steaks and sturgeon, and cover our horses and floors with cloth or carpets—no matter what all the learned men in the world may say about its necessity, is a crime, and one not committed once but constantly ; and that I with my luxury not merely tolerate it, but share in it . . . and I therefore felt and feel, and shall not cease to feel, that as long as I have any superfluous food and some one else has none, and I have two coats and some one else has none, I share in a constantly repeated crime. . . .

' The evening that I returned from Lyapinsky House, I told my impressions to a friend. He, a town dweller, began to explain with some satisfaction that it was the most natural thing in a city ; and that it was merely my provincialism that caused me to see anything particular in it. Things had always been so, and would and must always be so ; it is an inevitable condition of civilization. In London it is still worse . . . so there is nothing bad in it, and one must not be dissatisfied about it.

' I began to answer my friend ; but did it so warmly and irritably that my wife hurried in from an adjoining room to see what had happened. It seems that,

without knowing what I was doing, I had cried out with tears in my voice and had waved my arms at my friend, exclaiming : “ One cannot live so ; one cannot ; one cannot ! ”

‘ They put me to shame for my unseemly ardour, and told me that I cannot talk quietly about anything but always get unpleasantly excited. In particular they proved to me that the existence of such unfortunate people does not justify my spoiling the lives of those about me.

‘ I felt that this was quite just, and I was silenced ; but at the bottom of my heart I felt that I too was right, and I could not feel at ease.’

Of his article *On the Census* he says : ‘ Having given my article to be printed, I read it in proof at the Town Duma. While reading it, I felt so uncomfortable that I hesitated and blushed to tears. I noticed that everybody present was also uncomfortable.

‘ On my asking, at the end of the reading, whether the Census-takers accepted my proposal that they should remain at their posts to act as intermediaries between society and the necessitous poor, an awkward silence ensued. Then two members made speeches. These, as it were, corrected the awkwardness of my proposal. Sympathy was expressed with my idea, but the impracticability of my thought (of which every one approved) was pointed out. After that, all felt more at ease. . . .’

With great frankness Tolstoy describes the complete failure of his efforts to organize relief. The power and value of *What Then Must We Do?* lie not in any practical proposals, but in its vivid depiction of poverty and in the intensity of its demand for a social reformation.

An event of that winter in Moscow was the appearance of Sarah Bernhardt at the Big Theatre. One evening at the tea-table, when several visitors were present, Tolstoy spoke much about dramatic art. It was not simple table-talk but a lecture on the subject, evidently premeditated. And it was delivered powerfully and well. He treated the contemporary theatre with complete condemnation, and minutely proved the falsity of dramatic art in general. When he had finished, silence reigned for some time. Then, across the table, he addressed Mr. Kashkin, to whom we owe the story, and said :

‘ Are you going to see Sarah Bernhardt ? ’

‘ Of course ! ’ replied that gentleman.

This evoked from Tolstoy something in the nature of an angry exclamation, and he even struck the table slightly with his fist. But after a little while, amid general silence, his face lit up with a most good-humoured smile and he said :

‘ And do you know, I am awfully sorry that I’m not going ! ’

It was just that intensity of feeling, often accompanied by a frank avowal of the duality of his own nature, which made Tolstoy so interesting and so lovable. He never solved the problem of poverty, but he aroused in many hearts the desire to straighten the crooked places of the earth, and he often succeeded in carrying ‘ conviction of sin ’ to people whom no Church dignitaries would have reproached, and whom the late Samuel Smiles would have admired.



## CHAPTER IX

### RENUNCIATIONS

WITH the accession of Alexander III, Russia entered on a period of political, social and moral stagnation in which it seemed as though all that breathed of life, sincerity, freedom or progress must die of suffocation. The spy and *agent-provocateur* flourished, and Russians who rejected Orthodoxy or desired a Constitution were regarded, and frequently treated, as malefactors.

At this time Tolstoy's outspoken, unflinching appeal to men's reason and conscience came like a breath of fresh air in a plague-stricken country. Though it was forbidden, Tolstoy frankly discussed all vitally important subjects. Blind obedience to external authority was demanded by the powers that be; Tolstoy bowed to no authority but reason and conscience. The Government relied on brute force; Tolstoy denounced all such use of physical force as iniquitous, and the Government as morally indefensible. His influence in preparing the mind of the people for a revolution was immense, though, as we shall see later, he ceased to be popular among Russian constitutional reformers as soon as their movement became a definitely political struggle. The task of rousing an apathetic community by a moral appeal is different from that of shaping the political form in which the

new feeling shall express itself; and it can seldom happen that the same man is equally fitted for both tasks.

Leaving wife and family in Moscow, Tolstoy, in January 1882, betook himself to the solitude of Yasnaya to recover mental tranquillity after his slumming experiences.

In the calm of lonely country life, he recovered; and we find him, after receiving an affectionate letter from his wife, writing to her: 'Do not trouble about me, and above all do not accuse yourself. "Forgive us our debts as we forgive . . ."' As soon as one has forgiven others, one is oneself in the right. And your letter shows that you have forgiven and are not angry with any one. And I have long ceased to blame you. I only did that at first. I do not myself know why I have been so run down. Perhaps it was age, perhaps ill-health. . . . You say: "I love you, but you do not want that now." It is the one thing I do want! No one else can so cheer me, and your letter has cheered me. One's liver counts for something; but one's spiritual life goes its own way. My solitude was very necessary to me and has freshened me up, and your love gladdens me more than anything in life.'

A subsequent letter, written in April, describing the awakening of spring and the kind of life he was living, shows his love of the country: 'I went out to-day at eleven, and was intoxicated by the beauty of the morning. It was warm and dry. Here and there in the frost-glaze of the footpaths little spikes and tufts of grass show up from under the dead leaves and straw; the buds are swelling on the lilacs, the birds no longer sing at random, but have already begun to converse about something, and round the

sheltered corners of the house and by the manure-heaps bees are humming. I saddled my horse and rode out.

‘ In the afternoon I read, and then went to the apiary and the bathing-house. Everywhere grass, birds, honey-bees ; no policemen, no pavement, no cabmen, no stinks, and it is very pleasant—so pleasant that I grow sorry for you ’ [in Moscow].

He was at this time planning to get his *Confession* published, but his attempts were baffled by the Spiritual Censor, who had the sheets destroyed after they had already been printed. *Confession* was the first of a long series of his works which were for many years known in Russia only from ‘ illegal ’ copies smuggled into the country, or copied by hand, or hectographed or mimeographed in secret. The book was however printed in Russian at Geneva and immediately translated into other languages.

When it had been decided that the family must regularly winter in Moscow, Tolstoy, as a matter of convenience and economy, decided to purchase a town-house, and succeeded in finding one for Rs.36,000 (then about £3600) which suited very well. It was a large wooden house with a considerable garden, situated in the S.W. outskirts of the town, and was well chosen and cheaply purchased.

The following letter to her sister tells of the Countess’s first impression of it. ‘ We came to Moscow on 8th October. After the journey and a week’s packing, I was so tired and had become so irritable that nothing pleased me, but quite the contrary. . . . Lyovochka was at first very merry and animated, now he is learning Hebrew and has become more gloomy.’

Tolstoy’s desire to learn Hebrew arose from his Scripture studies. His teacher, the Moscow Rabbi,

says that he worked with great zeal and grasped the language with unusual rapidity, but anything that did not interest him he skipped.

To the Rabbi's surprise, Tolstoy soon began to read and understand so well, and to penetrate the meaning of the text so acutely, that on several occasions the master had to admit, after a dispute, that his pupil had seized a meaning he himself had overlooked.

The Countess, remembering the physical breakdown that had accompanied Tolstoy's enthusiasm for Greek ten years previously, strongly disapproved of these studies, and wrote to her sister :

'Lyovochka—alas!—has bent all his strength to learning Hebrew, and nothing else occupies or interests him. No! evidently his literary activity is at an end, and it is a great, great pity!'

We get a glimpse of Tolstoy in the Recollections of Boborykin, a popular novelist, who visited him at this time, and says: 'Tolstoy began with quiet humour and frankness (which showed how far he was removed from the life and habits of his family) to speak of the monstrous life of "the gentlefolk," and of how cruelly they treat their servants, and how in general they "delight the devils."

"The other day I said to our ladies," remarked he, "'How is it you are not ashamed to live so? A *bal costumé* at the Governor-General's. . . . Dressing up and exposing your bare arms and shoulders!' With furs and warm rooms, they can stand it; but the old coachman has to wait for them till four in the morning in 13 degrees below zero (Fahrenheit). Pity might at least be felt for him!'"

'This introduction set the tone of the conversation. One had to do with a man who was passing through a period of passionate repudiation of all the vain,

egotistic, predatory, and insensate things with which well-fed gentlefolk sweeten their idle existence. And that the first subjects for exposure should be his own "ladies" was quite in the order of things.'

Among other repudiations we find Tolstoy dropping his title, not demonstratively but quite simply. When a peasant called on him and addressed him as 'Your Excellency,' Tolstoy replied, 'I am called simply Leo Nikolayevich,' and passed on at once to speak of the matter in hand.

About this time M. A. Engelhardt, a stranger, wrote to him from the standpoint of a Christian-Revolutionary, and Tolstoy replied in an epistle 5000 words long, the first of the series of letter-essays dealing with important questions which, as the years went by, came more and more frequently from his pen.

This letter contains a most touching and characteristic passage. In it Tolstoy says:

'Another question directly and involuntarily follows: "Well, but you, Leo Nikolayevich, you preach—but what about practice?"'

'That is the most natural of questions; people always put it to me, and always triumphantly shut my mouth with it. "You preach, but how do you live?" And I reply that I do not preach and cannot preach, though I passionately desire to do so. I could only preach by deeds: and my deeds are bad. . . .

"But"—people say to me—"if you consider that apart from the fulfilment of the Christian teaching there is no reasonable life, and if you love that reasonable life, why do you not fulfil its commands?" I reply that I am to blame and am horrid and deserve to be despised for not fulfilling them. But yet, not so much in justification as in explanation of my inconsistency, I say: Look at my former and my



present life, and you will see that I try to fulfil them. I do not fulfil a ten-thousandth part, it is true, and I am to blame for that ; but I do not fulfil them, not because I do not wish to, but because I do not know how to. Teach me how to escape from the nets of temptation that have ensnared me ; help me, and I will fulfil them ; but even without help, I desire and hope to do so. Blame me—I do that myself—but blame *me*, and not the path I tread and show to those who ask me where, in my opinion, the road lies ! If I know the road home, and go along it drunk, staggering from side to side—does that make the road a wrong one ? If it be wrong, show me another ; if I have lost my way and stagger, help me, support me in the right path as I am ready to support you ; and do not baffle me, and do not rejoice that I have gone astray, and do not delightedly exclaim : “ Look at him ! He says he is going home, yet he goes into the bog ! ” Do not rejoice at that, but help me and support me !

‘ For indeed, you are not devils out of the bog, but are also men, going home. See, I am alone, and I cannot want to fall into the bog. Help me ! My heart breaks with despair that we have all gone astray ; and when I struggle with all my strength, you—at every failure, instead of pitying yourselves and me—flurry me and cry in ecstasy : “ See, he is following us into the bog ! ” ’

Tolstoy was rapidly becoming a saint. There are many traits in him that strongly remind one of St. Francis of Assisi, but I do not know how to convey this, except by translating reflections and dissertations, which would soon fill this book and would crowd out the external facts of his life, which I want to record. More and more he dwelt on the thought of doing

God's work, and feared, rather than sought, the praise of his fellow-men.

It was about this time that Tolstoy made one of the few close friendships of his life, and one that afforded him great pleasure and spiritual refreshment, as well as much encouragement in his work.

Gay, a celebrated Russian painter of French extraction, had some time before this ceased to paint, and had come to feel life hardly worth living. In his *Memoirs* he tells us what it was that aroused him from his apathy :

‘ In 1882 a word of the great writer L. N. Tolstoy, *On the Moscow Census*, happened to fall into my hand. Tolstoy, visiting cellars and finding wretched people in them, writes : “ Our lack of love for the lowest is the cause of their wretched condition.”

‘ As a spark kindles inflammable material, so that word set me aflame. . . . I went to Moscow to embrace that great man and work for him. I arrived : bought canvas and paints, and drove to his house. . . . I saw him, embraced him, and kissed him. “ Leo Nikolayevich, I have come to do anything you like. Shall I paint your daughter ? ” “ No, in that case, better paint my wife.” I did so. I loved that man unboundedly ; he had revealed everything to me. I could now name what I had loved all my life—and above all, we loved the same thing. For a month I saw him every day.’

The friendship so suddenly struck up lasted unimpaired till Gay's death twelve years later.

At this point of the story, a new witness must be introduced—the widow of a Frenchman named Seuron. She was governess with the Tolstoys for six years. Conventional, narrow-minded, observant, lively and indiscreet as she was, Mme Anna Seuron's testimony

has to be treated with great caution. Still she is one of the very few who, after actually living in the family, put their experience on record; and she certainly helps us to understand some phases of Tolstoy's character and conduct.

This was the impression he made on her, when she first entered the family and found them just established in their new home in Moscow :

' He seemed far younger than his age. He came up to me with quick step and gave me his hand : a good, firm hand whose touch left a pleasant impression. His very small, steel-grey eyes glittered. At first meeting, he always looks one straight in the face . . . and he often produced on me the impression of a photographic apparatus.'

She adds : ' The eldest daughter was being taken out into Society, and the Countess herself, who, notwithstanding her large family, retained a very attractive appearance, was also fond of Society.

' The Count hindered nothing. He was assured that everything in life is transitory and that even along that road his family would reach the convictions he held. . . .'

She remarks that Tolstoy's searchings among the poor in the slums were not long continued : ' He had been seized by a feverish desire to descend into the abyss. He used to return home with a terrible headache, his eyes glittering like tiny bits of steel. He seemed quite ill. " What must we do? What teach? . . . Words are useless! I will begin by setting an example, and will begin with such a small thing that every one will be able to imitate my work ! "

' " In the sweat of thy brow shalt thou eat bread," is said in the Bible. And one day after eight o'clock

the Count harnessed himself to the hand-sledge to which a tub was attached, and dragging it from the yard, filled the tub with water from the well, and then slowly, step by step, dragged it to the kitchen. And the next day, and the next, he did the same. By that work he was serving others. . . . And once when there was no water, Moscovites might have seen how he, poorly dressed, descended like all the other water-carriers to the river Moskva. The journey took him a whole hour, and he returned home dead-tired. . . . Not the work itself was important, but its purpose ; and so it was with heating his stove, lighting the samovar, doing his own room, and cleaning his own boots.'

Of the way in which Tolstoy dressed, Anna Seuron tells us :

' During the winter he found a peculiar pleasure in walking about in the poorest attire. He would go out in a sheepskin coat and greased high-boots and sheepskin cap, exactly like a peasant ; and sticking his hands in his pockets or tucking them into the opposite sleeves, would set off to visit his society acquaintances, or would wander about the town seeking new impressions.

' One day, when I was unwell, he went to fetch my son from the Institute of Oriental Languages. To avoid any misunderstanding, I telegraphed to my son that the Count would call for him at two o'clock. The telegram reached the Principal, and all the masters waited at the entrance. But when the Count came he was not recognized, but was told to " sit down, old fellow ! " and allowed to wait, on the locker in the hall.

' When my son came, ready dressed, into the hall and greeted the Count in French, those present opened

their mouths with astonishment that a peasant in sheepskin should understand French : and it was only after the two had gone down the steps and out into the street that it occurred to the masters who were waiting to see the Count, that this was he.'

The intensity of conflict aroused by his change of outlook had at this time begun to subside. Tolstoy was training himself to mildness, and ceasing to expect others readily to accept his views or suddenly to change their hearts and lives. Experience was showing him that he could not himself escape from his position without coercing the will of those to whom he was closely bound and whose affection he prized. This made him realize that a man's external position is no safe indication of the state of his soul.

A letter from the Countess to her sister in January 1883 says :

'Lyovochka is very tranquil, and at work writing some article or other. Remarks against town-life, and the life of the well-to-do in general, burst from him occasionally. That pains me ; but I know he cannot help it. He is a leader ; one who goes ahead of the crowd, pointing the way men should go. But I am the crowd ; I live in its current. Together with the crowd I see the light of the lamp which every leader (and Lyovochka, of course, also) carries, and I acknowledge it to be the light. But I cannot go faster, I am held by the crowd, and by my surroundings and habits.'

Anna Seuron succeeds in giving an impression of the spiritual ferment which accompanied Tolstoy's attempt to escape from the ordinary ruts of life and to shape life anew :

'Tolstoy has been much blamed for leading the young astray . . . many come to grief ! Others succeed in obtaining a kind of ethical satisfaction for themselves.



I could give names to show that those who had means were those who came off best. If I have Rs. 50,000 it only aids digestion to do my own room or plough my field ; but if I torment my soul out of my body merely to be Tolstoyan, the thing may well prove indigestible.

‘ Sons of some of the highest aristocracy discarded gold and lands and went into the desert to eat locusts. . . . Most of them came to grief with their madness and good intentions . . . and many of Tolstoy’s followers are now boiling in brimstone or are like mice in a trap.’

There is some truth in these remarks. Many who, trusting to their own judgment, tried to discard the supporting irons of convention and law went completely to pieces, and furnished confirmation of T. H. Green’s wisdom in discountenancing any ‘ other enthusiasm of humanity than the one which has travelled the common highway of reason, the life of the good neighbour and the honest citizen.’

Anna Seuron continues : ‘ In the village the Count was loved, it is true, but less than one might have expected. He made no demands on his peasants, but he also did nothing, or but little, for them. He was absorbed in his system, which demanded self-help.’

In May 1883 Tolstoy visited his Samara estate and underwent a kumys treatment. From there he wrote to his wife :

‘ I do not know how it will be in future, but at present my position as proprietor is unpleasant to me, as are the applications of the poor whom I cannot satisfy.’

It was while Tolstoy was still in Samara that Turgenev managed with painful effort to indite his last letter, written in pencil and unsigned :

'BOUGIVAL, 27 or 28 June 1883

'KIND AND DEAR LEO NIKOLAYEVICH,—I have long not written to you because, to tell the truth, I have been, and am, on my death-bed. I cannot recover; that is out of the question. I am writing to you specially to say how glad I have been to be your contemporary, and to express my last and sincere request. My friend, return to literary activity! That gift came to you whence all the rest comes. Ah, how happy I should be if I could think my request would have an effect on you! I am played out—the doctors do not even know what to call my malady, *névralgie stomacale goutteuse*. I can neither walk, nor eat, nor sleep. It is wearisome even to repeat it all! My friend—great writer of our Russian land—listen to my request! Let me know you have received this scrap of paper, and allow me yet once more cordially to embrace you, your wife, and all yours. . . . I can write no more. . . . I am tired.'

This greeting—addressed to the great rival by whom Turgenev had often been grievously offended, whom he had never fully understood, and whom latterly he had hardly understood at all—is most touching; yet it indicates how unaware Turgenev was of the immense human interest of the tasks which had for a while turned Tolstoy aside from novel-writing. Had Tolstoy not written *Confession*, *The Gospel in Brief*, and *What Then Must We Do?* the interest the world feels in him would be but a fraction of what it is. The problems of life he faced, the guidance for life he offers, the fact that—artist to his finger-tips—there yet were things for which he was ready to forgo his art, are what have most profoundly stirred the interest and secured for him the love of mankind.

Even after he had returned to Yasnaya, Tolstoy delayed replying to Turgenev's letter, and on 22nd August (O.S.) the latter died. It was not that Tolstoy meant to leave the letter unanswered, but—hurt by Turgenev's disregard for what was now most important to him—he postponed writing till he could do so in a more cordial frame of mind. Like other incidents in the relations between these two, it leaves a sense of indelible regret, and makes one feel how complex and difficult a matter is intercourse between susceptible people.

In September 1883 Tolstoy was called on to serve as juryman at the District Court in the town near Yasnaya. He declined to serve, and was fined Rs. 100 (£10). His refusal was part of his repudiation of the whole system of public justice: civil or criminal. The act followed logically from the principle of Non-Resistance he had adopted.

A very different call reached him about the same time, from the Society of Lovers of Russian Literature, to read a paper at a meeting in memory of Turgenev. He agreed to do so.

In October he wrote from Yasnaya to his wife in Moscow: 'I am always thinking about Turgenev. I love him terribly, pity him, and am always reading him. I am living with him all the time: I certainly will either myself read something about him or will give something to be read.'

The lecture was however prohibited by the Government; and that Tolstoy, who belonged to no party and disliked politics, and whose pronouncement on Turgenev as a writer would have been of permanent interest, should not have been allowed to speak on the subject, is characteristic of the *régime* which by its over-anxiety to maintain itself incurred such universal dislike that it ensured its own destruction.

But amid the public matters with which Tolstoy was concerned, one must not omit to tell of his lighter and more homely traits. Referring to a day in 1883, Anna Seuron says :

‘ This evening, in the big room upstairs, I saw that wise man dance a valse with as much lightness and agility as though he were the Count of former days. And really, quite unconsciously, he sometimes shakes twenty years off his shoulders ; and yet he has the peculiar talent of never appearing ridiculous, no matter how he is dressed—even when his sock shows through a hole in his boot.’

His light-heartedness on that particular evening she attributes to the fact that he had just taken his first lesson in bootmaking. This occupation was part of his effort to produce more and consume less, and had for him an ethical importance quite out of proportion to the value of the footwear he produced. Before long, he appeared in high hunting-boots of his own make.

‘ He was pleased when people praised his work, and he talked with enthusiasm about the difficulties of bootmaking and especially the difficulty of threading the waxen ends. Sitting on a low bench, and in all respects imitating his teacher, the Count ardently and conscientiously tormented himself, threading the waxen end.’

I knew a man to whom Tolstoy from charity gave a pair of the boots he made, and who had worn them, and I asked him what he thought of the boots. ‘ Could not be worse,’ was his emphatic reply !

Tolstoy was at this time engaged on the completion of *What I Believe*, which, like most of his works, was written and rewritten, corrected and altered again and again. It soon began to circulate in hectographed

copies. Before long it was printed in Geneva, and translated into nearly every European language ; but twenty years passed before it was allowed in Russia.

Among the friends and disciples who mustered around Tolstoy at this time was V. G. Tchertkof, an ex-Captain of the Guards. (He was the only son of a General influential at Court, the owner of very large estates, and his mother was in close touch with the Empress.) This friendship lasted to the end of Tolstoy's life, and eventually Tchertkof, who was singularly masterful and domineering, acquired a curious sort of control over Tolstoy's decisions and practically directed his public affairs.

Tolstoy was now settling down to a quarter of a century of steady, unremitting literary work, carried on with almost monotonous regularity. The external conditions of his life had shaped themselves very much into the form they kept almost to the end, except that his performance of hard manual labour did not continue long.

His youngest daughter, Alexandra, was born in June 1884, just when Tolstoy was passing through a period of acute distress on account of what he deemed the wrongfulness of the external conditions of his life. His state of mind caused great suffering to the Countess.

I will omit the story (mentioned in my *Life of Tolstoy*) which the Countess told me of what passed between them before this birth, for I am informed that there is evidence (in a part of Tolstoy's Diary which I have not seen) which conflicts with her recollection of the matter, and I therefore at present regard it as being in doubt.

In October 1884 he wrote to his wife : ' Don't be angry, darling, that I cannot attribute any importance



to those monetary accounts! . . . I cannot help repeating that our happiness or unhappiness cannot in the least depend on whether we lose or acquire something, but only on what we ourselves are. . . . Therefore, the question how much our income shrinks cannot occupy me. If one attributes importance to that, it hides from us what really is important.'

The Countess's feeling about her husband's way of life is indicated by a letter of hers of October 1884: 'Yesterday I received your letter, and it made me sad. I see that you have remained at Yasnaya not to do the mental work I regard as higher than anything in life, but to play at being Robinson Crusoe. You have sent away Andrian (a man-servant), who was desperately anxious to stay out the month, and have let the man-cook go, to whom also it would have been a pleasure to do something for his pension; and from morning to evening you will be doing unprofitable physical work which even among the peasants is done by the young men and the women. So it would have been better and more useful had you remained with the children. Of course you will say that to live so accords with your convictions, and that you enjoy it. That is another matter, and I can only say: "Enjoy yourself!" but all the same I am annoyed that such mental strength should be lost at log-splitting, lighting samovars, and making boots—which are all excellent as a rest or a change of occupation, but not as a special employment. Well, enough of that! Had I not written it, I should have remained vexed; but now it is past, and the thing amuses me, and I have quieted down, saying: "Let the child amuse itself as it likes, so long as it doesn't cry."' (A Russian proverb.)

But though the Countess could be vexed, she did

not bear malice, and wrote another letter the same day, saying : ' All at once I pictured you vividly to myself, and a sudden flood of tenderness rose in me. There is something in you so wise, kind, naïve, and obstinate, and it is all lit up by that tender interest for every one, natural to you alone, and by your look that reaches straight to people's souls.'

Tolstoy's sincere desire to act in accord with the principles expressed in *What Then Must We Do?* is abundantly evident to all who know the facts. On more than one occasion, he left home intending never to return, but like St. Francis to become a beggar in the service of mankind. Before he had gone far, however, another feeling drew him back to those whom he could not desert without arousing angry and bitter feelings. I have often heard the Countess blamed for her attitude, and no doubt she dreaded being left with her large family dependent on charity. But another feeling existed in her practical mind—the feeling that to waste and spoil is easy, while to preserve and repair is difficult when established and customary rule is abandoned ; and that if—as Tolstoy felt—the acquisition, holding, and spending of property is a responsibility, so also is its distribution or abandonment. If I at all regret that Tolstoy did not have his way in the matter, it is only because so sincere a man would certainly have gained by experience, and I think he would have learnt to doubt the validity of some of his ' principles,' and to see that the property arrangements of the world have come to be what they are, not merely because men are selfish and wicked, but largely for reasons he never sufficiently considered ; and that though those arrangements may and should be greatly changed, this cannot be accomplished by rejecting or despising the systems

evolved by those who went before us or among whom we live, but rather by discriminating between what is fundamental and what can be improved in their arrangements.

Soon after this, Tolstoy offered to transfer his fortune, including his copyrights, to his wife, saying that he could not bear the burden: 'So you want to place it on my shoulders, your wife's,' replied the Countess, and tearfully refused his offer.

Telling me of this many years later, she said she regretted having then refused, for it resulted in a prolonged period of hesitation and uncertainty, leading eventually in 1891 to a division of the property between herself and the children. Some of the latter have let their portions slip through their fingers, so she thinks she would have done better had she accepted the whole burden and administered it to the best of her ability.

Of their life in Moscow, Anna Seuron has given the following sketch:

'Life in the Tolstoy family in 1884 arranged itself very pleasantly. The eldest son was at the University, the next two were also studying, and the younger children were being taught at home. The eldest daughter went out less; but on the other hand the Count's house became a centre of attraction. Under the guidance of Pryanishnikov (an excellent Moscow artist), Drawing Evenings were arranged; and we also had Literary Evenings, to which Fet, Garshin, and other well-known writers came. Musical Evenings were also arranged at which an eminent musician used to perform.'

Tolstoy's neglect of his property did not result in the family being compelled to simplify their lives, though his example and precepts led to their doing

things in a much simpler and less conventional manner than would otherwise have been the case. What it did lead to, from 1882-3, was to the Countess becoming the chief publisher of his works. Here again Anna Seuron says: 'It was at this time that the Countess began to make money out of her husband's works. The business grew with amazing rapidity, and one edition after another—by subscription and without subscription—appeared. She attended to the proofs herself and worked at them till late at night.

'The Count behaved very strangely in this matter. It was his conviction that money was an evil and the cause of moral deterioration. And suddenly he became aware that a vein of gold had been discovered, which had its origin in him. At first, when mention began to be made of selling the books, he stopped his ears and his face assumed a frightened and pitiful expression; but the Countess held firmly to her purpose of obtaining a secure competence for herself and her children: for with an increasing family and a decreasing income, things could not go on much longer.'

To commence the publication of her husband's works, the Countess borrowed Rs. 10,000 (£1000) from her mother, and Rs. 15,000 (£1500) from a friend.

During the first year she made a gross turnover of Rs. 60,000 (£6000), which was considered an extraordinarily large sale, and the profit on it sufficed to remove the financial difficulties she had been faced by.

These years of transition and repudiation are among the hardest to describe. Tolstoy was not at rest. He perplexed his family and friends, and consequently presents difficulties to his biographer; but we are now reaching smoother water, and though the period of storm and stress was not over, it will be possible to

tell the rest of the story more concisely, for Tolstoy had by this time not merely seen his aim and defined his purpose, but had more or less tested his strength, and found out what he could or could not undertake.

Mention has already been made of the influence of Tolstoy's religious opinions in preparing men's minds for the Revolution. His indictment of the property system undoubtedly tended in the same direction. His desire was that the well-to-do should voluntarily renounce their possessions and devote themselves to the service of the poor and needy, and he certainly had little sympathy with the Social Democrats who preached a class-war. Nevertheless his emphatic condemnation of things as they are, and his graphic depiction of the sufferings of the poor, powerfully influenced public opinion and inclined men to sympathize with any propaganda that promised to 'fill the hungry with good things.'



## CHAPTER X

### THE NEW LIFE AND 'WHAT THEN MUST WE DO?'

SO gradually did the successive phases of Tolstoy's life merge, like dissolving views, into one another, that no attempts to date them can be more than approximately satisfactory. One is tempted to say that by 1885 he had definitely adopted his new path of life : a life of simple, strenuous work, the mental part of which was specially directed towards removing obstacles to moral progress and clearing up the perplexities that vex the souls of men. Yet the facts refuse to fit neatly into such a generalization, and we find the strands of his old life weaving themselves into the web of his new endeavour. So, for instance, when Prince L. D. Urusov (the first translator into French of *What I Believe*) fell ill and was advised to go to the Crimea for a change, we find Tolstoy offering to be his companion, though this must have seriously interrupted his work and did not accord with the laborious frugality he aimed at.

When they reached Sevastopol, Tolstoy chanced to pick up a cannon ball which was one he had himself fired during the siege thirty years before ! The evidence which showed this to be the case cannot be given here, but is mentioned in my *Life of Tolstoy*.

He had very seldom been separated from his wife

and now, travelling in the South in conditions of luxury and leisure, he felt himself exposed to temptations he feared might prove too strong for him, and hurried home to her.

In that same year a publishing business called *The Mediator* (*Posrednik*) was established. This was the most useful and successful of the propagandist undertakings promoted by Tolstoy.

Up to that time the literature supplied to the peasants had been of a wretched description: consisting on the one hand of legends and Lives of the Saints—in which anything of moral worth was often smothered in crude superstition—and on the other of penny-dreadfuls and catchpenny booklets of a quality beneath contempt. To supply literature embodying the best that has been thought and felt, and to supply this in the simplest, briefest and cheapest possible form, was the purpose of the *Mediator*. Tolstoy felt that if it is at all permissible for authors to sit comfortably and write books, while consuming food, wearing clothes and occupying lodgings other men have produced, they should at least see to it that they provide wholesome mental sustenance for those whose material products they employ. For if the bookmen devote themselves to pleasing the privileged classes, and only give the labourers what is for them mentally indigestible, then they are a burden and a curse to the mass of their fellow-men.

Speaking to Danilevsky, a well-known writer, Tolstoy said :

‘ These millions of Russians, able to read, stand before us like hungry jackdaws with open mouths and say to us : “ Gentlemen writers of our native land, throw into these mouths literary food worthy of yourselves and of us ; write for us, who hunger for living

words, and free us from those penny-dreadfuls and the rubbish of the market." The simple, honest Russian folk deserve that we should respond to their call. I have thought much about this, and to the best of my ability have decided to make an effort in that direction.'

The *Mediator*, which still exists, has done admirable work, despite many difficulties. It had not long been started before the Censors perceived that its simple booklets and stories meant something and, in so far as they roused people to think and feel, were a danger to the existing order. After they had detected Tolstoy's influence in the new Publishing Company, every kind of obstacle was placed in its path. How exacting the Censors became is shown by the fact that when the *Mediator* published the Sermon on the Mount as a reading lesson in a primer, the book was refused a licence until the injunction to 'take no thought for the morrow' had been suppressed!

Even in England we are somewhat indebted to Tolstoy for the various series of cheap classics that now circulate so largely. When, in 1888, W. T. Stead visited Yasnaya, Tolstoy and he discussed the lack of cheap and good literature for the people, and Stead's subsequent ventures in this direction were influenced by that conversation. One of his assistants, Grant Richards, after starting in business on his own account, brought out the World's Classics series (which subsequently passed to the Oxford University Press), and the popularity of that series encouraged the production of various other cheap collections which do much to bring good literature within the reach of men of small means.

In this connection I may mention that when the first volumes of his works appeared in the World's Classics series, Tolstoy commended both the transla-

tions and the edition very warmly, and expressed surprise that so much could be given at the price, so well printed and neatly bound. Circumstances long delayed the appearance of further volumes of his works in that series, but recently the issue has been renewed, and further volumes are in course of preparation, so that there is good hope of our having before long a collected English edition of Tolstoy's works, superior to any previous edition in rendering, and issued in a cheap form that had his express approval.

At first, short stories written by Tolstoy were the mainstay of the *Mediator*, but some of these were promptly forbidden by the Censor. During 1885 he contributed *Two Old Men*, *A Spark Neglected Burns the House*, and *Where Love is, God is* (all in *Twenty-three Tales*).

In 1884 or 1885 Tolstoy wrote his essay on *Industry and Idleness* (in *Essays and Letters*) as preface to a little book written by a peasant-sectarian named Bondarev, who was in exile in Siberia. Bondarev was a first-rate ploughman, and burned with indignation at the contempt often shown to peasants by those rich enough to evade manual labour. He formulated his religion of work ('In the sweat of thy brow shalt thou eat bread') with a lucidity and vigour that evoked Tolstoy's unbounded enthusiasm. Tolstoy wrote that: 'Many have said and are saying the same thing. Thus, for instance, Ruskin . . . in Letter 67 of his *Fors Clavigera* says: "It is physically impossible that true religious knowledge, or pure morality, should exist among any classes of a nation who do not work with their hands for their bread." Many go round this truth and express it (as Ruskin does) with various reservations, but no one else has done what Bondarev does in acknowledging bread-

labour to be the fundamental religious law of life.' And he declared the book to be the most important work that had been written by a Russian.

During 1885 Tolstoy wrote an essay-letter to Romain Rolland on *Manual Labour*, and continued to work on *What Then Must We Do?* He also devoted himself vigorously to field labour and, much to the perturbation of the Countess, disciples began to gather round him.

Anna Seuron tells us: 'When making tea Tolstoy would almost count each leaf, yet he was losing thousands by bad management of his estates. For a time he quite ceased to take any care of his personal appearance and was absurdly dirty and untidy. He, who had always worn very fine socks, suddenly demanded strips of linen and began to wrap his legs in them as peasants do. . . .

'It was a most amazing time, and it is quite comprehensible that people who heard reports of his eccentricities should have considered him simply mad. But he was never saner than at that period. He was testing, internally and externally, just how much he could endure, and how hard it is to do without this or that thing. Of course, only those nearest to him could know this.'

This again is one of her thumbnail sketches: 'Hay-making! What a picture! Counts, Princes, teachers, and all sorts of blue-blooded people tried to work in competition with the peasants. Scythes hacked awkwardly, mowing the sappy grass. Every one strove to outdo the others. As far as eye could reach, workers were seen everywhere. All the peasants were there, and so was the Countess in a Russian dress; children and governesses—we all helped to turn the hay.



‘ And there he stands, that peasant Count, in a Russian shirt and trousers, his legs wide apart, mowing ; and looking at him, I see that he is quite engrossed in it. He is listening to the sound of the scythes and enjoying himself. . . .

‘ At that time a very original man arrived from America to see the Count. He called himself Frey ; but in spite of his foreign name he was a Russian. He was about fifty, but his appearance was blooming and youthful ; he was a vegetarian, and for ten years had not even used any salt.

‘ The Countess was beside herself with vexation, for even her daughters came under his influence and ceased to eat meat.’

When I made their acquaintance, a few years later, the Countess Mary was a vegetarian, and her elder sister, the Countess Tatiana, was very nearly so. Tolstoy, in spite of digestive troubles and his wife’s opposition, remained a vegetarian to the end of his life. Anna Seuron’s view is that ‘ The Count took up these manias only in the spirit of penitence, to subdue his flesh and elevate and enlighten his spirit. There was even a time when he really seemed to wither up and become thin. He tormented himself, and wrote with his heart’s blood. . . . Yet at the same time he was good-natured and often merry. He would play croquet, run races with his sons, play the piano, and of an evening drew devils on scraps of paper. He laughed at things that seemed serious to other people, sewed new boots and mended old ones, rejoiced in his frugal economies, and played with the little children : in a word, he was a simple, kindly, good family man, who did not know how to count beyond three, and would never stir up the mud in any stream.

‘ It happened at times that he threw off from himself

Leo Tolstoy the writer, the Count, the shoemaker, the aristocrat, and the father of a family, and became simply himself—for, like an onion, he possessed the capacity to throw off one skin after another.'

Feinermann (who was then acting as schoolmaster at Yasnaya) tells us: 'It was from Frey that Tolstoy first heard Vegetarianism preached, and in him he first saw a man who had consciously abjured all slaughter.'

"How good that is! How good! . . ." said Tolstoy, enraptured. "But can vegetable food suffice?"

"Even wheat grains alone suffice," answered Frey. "One only need dry them and use them as food."

"What? Not even ground?" said Tolstoy, aghast.

"Has man any better mill than his own mouth?" answered Frey, and evoked a storm of enthusiasm by his reply.

'Tolstoy's delight was unbounded. He embraced Frey, kissed him, and in all ways expressed his goodwill towards him.'

Anna Seuron tells us: 'It was at this time that he renounced hunting and shooting. . . .

'The Count seemed possessed by a fever of renunciation. Now had come the turn of tobacco. Oh, unfortunate man! How hard it was to part from tobacco, and from the cigarettes he used to smoke so awkwardly yet with such enjoyment! "Smoking is harmful," announced the Count, one morning; "it is a luxury! Instead of tobacco, barley might be grown to feed the famished." And his horn cigarholder was set aside on the shelf. The Count gained a new, extremely difficult victory over himself. He suffered unendurable torment, positively not knowing what to do with himself. But after a while, despite his convictions, he again yielded to his inclination:

for smoking really soothed his nerves, and those who suppose the Count to be an ascetic in the full sense of the word are much mistaken. He has had, and still has, times when he is capable of any amount of self-denial ; but with his physique and his senses the Count can never be a saint.'

Difficult as the struggle may have been, Tolstoy finally completely overcame his craving for tobacco, and never once smoked during the years that I knew him.

One pleasure that he allowed himself was that in summer he always had flowers on his table, or stuck in his leather girdle, or held in his hand. ' You should see,' says Anna Seuron, ' with what enjoyment he lifts them from time to time to his big nose, and how he then looks round mildly as if thanking the Creator for giving us flowers.'

She goes on to say : ' That winter the Count quite neglected his fine estate in Samara. It was too far off, there was at that time no direct communication by railway, and moreover from time to time some famished teacher would turn up who would persuade the Count that he (the teacher) was well acquainted with agricultural affairs. If he also professed agreement with the Count's ideas, he was sure to secure a place in Samara. . . . Matters there took an exceedingly bad turn . . . hundreds of thousands of roubles were lost, but the estate ultimately proved to be a veritable gold-mine, and yielded a revenue in spite of everything. . . .

' In those days the Count was enough to drive any observer crazy. . . . Like a ruminant he swallowed and threw up and re-swallowed his ideas ; and those around him—especially those who came in his way—suffered from this cud-chewing process.'

The visitors at Yasnaya naturally tended to divide

themselves into two camps: those who adhered to Tolstoy and favoured manual labour and a peasant life, and those on the side of the Countess, who wished things to go on as heretofore. The two sets were sometimes called the 'blacks' and the 'whites.'

One of the 'blacks' has recorded his observations of people he met at Yasnaya. He mentions Masha (Mary), the second daughter, devoted to her father and an ardent adherent of his teaching: 'Masha, Tolstoy's favourite daughter, ran in: a light and slim maiden with a kerchief on her head arranged like a young peasant woman's, wearing a peasant-costume of hand-spun material and an apron.' He also mentions Marya Alexandrovna Schmidt, who had been a governess at an Institute for girls in Petersburg, but having come under Tolstoy's influence abandoned teaching and tried to live by manual labour on the land. He tells of a day's work with Tolstoy, Masha and M. A. Schmidt, manuring a peasant woman's land.

'In the evening we all met again in Leo Nikolayevich's large dining-room; and though we had changed our clothes, the "ladies" (as they called the Countess, her sister, and the governess) made grimaces at the smell, and brought in plates from which thin streams of perfumed smoke rose from burning pastilles and scented herbs.

' "Smoking out the unclean spirits with incense!" laughed Leo Nikolayevich. "You would do better to come and work with us; then there would be no need of this smoking-out!"'

Overhearing a conversation among his adherents concerning his domestic circumstances, Tolstoy came up and said:

'In my heart I have many a time decided to go away and settle over there, at the corner of the forest. There

used to be an apiary there, and the beekeeper's hut is still standing. I could live and work and write there. I have felt drawn, and even now feel irresistibly drawn thither ; but I have said to myself, " That would be anchoritism : it would be like standing on a pillar." And I want to live and serve God and work in His fields with the equipment and the encumbrances it has pleased Him to bestow on me. I have weighed and sounded my soul in all sincerity, and always when I imagine myself in my present circumstances of oppression, opposition, and ridicule, subduing my pride and my ambitious desire to show men an example, I feel nearer to Him Who is guiding my life, and am conscious of His hand. But as soon as I imagine myself there, in a state of freedom, living a model life in peace, I lose the sense of closeness to Him, His hand no longer seems near me, and a horror of coldness and desolation seizes me, and I say to myself " No, I will remain where I am." '

Another witness tells us that ' When Gay stayed at Yasnaya, he and Tolstoy worked for three months at bricklaying, and together built a hut and out-buildings for the Widow Anisya. The Count and Gay laid the bricks, while the Countesses Tatiana and Marya plaited straw for the roof. But there was a difficulty about making the brick-oven. I cannot tell you how they laughed over it. Tolstoy sat inside, and Gay from outside handed him the materials. For a long time nothing came of it ; but at last they managed to get the oven built.'

Much has been written about that hut, but it was not a success. The clay was not properly wetted, and before long the building became crooked and began to fall to pieces. The surprising thing however is not that Tolstoy should have shown himself inexpert at house-



building, but that he could do so many different things, and several of them so well.

Having convinced himself that there is a direct connection between the lives of the rich and of the poor, Tolstoy proceeded to attack the problem of poverty. His great book on that subject, *What Then Must We Do?* was finished in February 1886.

He tells how the produce of the country is attracted to town, and how the countryfolk follow this wealth hoping, by serving the rich as waiters, footmen, cabmen, or prostitutes, or by making carriages, fashionable clothes, etc., to recover some of that wealth. He says that we who share in the unceasing orgie that goes on among the rich in towns may suppose that the difference between the lives of the rich and of the poor seems natural to the latter. 'There are people so naïve as even to say that the poor are grateful to us for feeding them by our luxury. But being poor does not deprive men of reason; and the poor reason as we do. When *we* hear of a man losing or wasting a thousand or two thousand pounds, we immediately think, "What a stupid and worthless fellow he is, and how well I could have used that money for a building I have long wanted, or to improve my farm, etc."; and the poor reason in just the same way, when they see wealth senselessly wasted; and they do it the more insistently because they want the money not to satisfy some caprice, but to supply things they urgently need. . . .

'The poor never have admitted and never will admit that it is right for some to have a continual holiday while others must always fast and work. At first it astonishes and angers them to see it. Then they grow accustomed to it; and seeing that such arrangements are considered lawful, they themselves try to avoid work and to share in the perpetual holiday.

' One often hears people complain of the conduct of their servants. Servants often really do behave badly, but this is not to be attributed to natural perversity so much as to the example set by their employers. If—as that example often suggests to them—it is good to enjoy oneself and not to work, what more natural than that they should seek to share these good things as much as they can? Some succeed, and join the ever-feasting ones, others approach that position, while others break down before reaching their aim and having lost the habit of work fill our brothels and doss-houses. . . .

' So I came to the conclusion that our wealth is the cause of the misery of the poor.

' I see that the life of the working people demands strain and labour (as all natural life necessarily does) and that many working folk, especially the old men, the women, and the children, simply perish from intense work while the life of the non-workers reaches a degree of security which in olden times people only dreamed of in fairy tales. We have reached the condition of the owner of the purse with the inexhaustible rouble: that is to say a position in which a man is not merely freed from the law of labour for the maintenance of life, but is able without labour to use all life's bounties and hand on to his children, or to whom he likes, that purse with the inexhaustible rouble. . . . I see that the ideal of an industrious life has been replaced by the ideal of an inexhaustible purse. . . . I sit on a man's neck, weighing him down and making him carry me, and yet assure myself and others that I pity him greatly and wish to ease his lot by all possible means—except by getting off his back! . . .

' And I came to feel that in money itself, in the very possession of money, there is something evil and

immoral ; and that money itself, and the fact that I possess it, is one of the chief causes of the evils I saw around me—and I asked myself, What is money ? ’

He goes on to say that, wherever we find people consuming luxuriously without producing, and other people overworked and wretchedly poor—there slavery exists. Money makes the poor the common slaves of all the rich. It represents power to make others work. It is the modern form of slavery.

‘ I wished to help the unfortunate, and I had money, and shared the common superstition that money represents work, or at any rate is a lawful and good thing. But having begun to give away money, I saw that I was giving bills drawn on the poor . . . and so the absurdity of what I had wished to do—help the poor by making demands on them—became evident to me.

‘ These considerations supplied me with an answer to my question, What to do ?

‘ As soon as I had understood what riches are and what money is, I understood the truth handed down from the earliest times by Buddha, Isaiah, Lao-Tsze, Socrates, and to us most clearly and indubitably by Jesus Christ and his forerunner, John the Baptist. In reply to my question : “ What must we do ? ” John said simply, briefly, and clearly : “ He that hath two coats, let him impart to him that hath none ; and he that hath food, let him do likewise.” The same was said many times by Christ with even greater clearness. He said : “ Blessed are the poor, and woe unto the rich.” He said it is impossible to serve God and Mammon. He forbade the disciples to take either money or two coats. He told the rich youth that because he was rich he could not enter the Kingdom of God, and that it is easier for a camel to go through

the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the Kingdom of God. He said that he who does not leave all, house and children and fields, to follow him, is not his disciple. He told the parable of the rich man who, like our rich men, did nothing wrong, but merely dressed well and ate and drank nice things, and thereby lost his soul; and of the beggar Lazarus, who did nothing good, but was saved merely because he was poor.

'I understood that man, besides living for his personal welfare, must serve the welfare of others, as bees do . . . and that man's unhappiness comes from the slavery in which some men hold others. I understood that the slavery of our times is caused by violence; by the army-system, the monopolization of land, and the exaction of money. And having understood the meaning of these three instruments of the new slavery, I could not but wish to free myself from using them.

'The rejection of the customary methods of exploiting the labour of others brings one inevitably to the necessity of moderating one's requirements, and of doing for oneself what others used to do for us.

'Finally I came to the following simple conclusion: that in order not to produce suffering and vice, I ought to consume as little as possible of the work of others, and do as much work as possible myself. I came, by a long road, to the unavoidable deduction formulated a thousand years ago by the Chinese, in their saying: "If there is one man idle, there is another dying of hunger." . . .

'When a man can live on the backs of others from childhood till he is thirty, promising, when he has finished his education, to do something useful which no one has asked him to do, and when from the age of thirty till death he can go on living in the same way,



still promising to do something no one has asked him to do—this cannot be, and in our society is not, a division of labour, but simply a seizure by the strong of the fruits of the labour of others; it is this very robbery theologians used to speak of as a “divine dispensation,” and philosophers afterwards as “a necessary form of life,” and that scientific science now calls “the organic division of labour.”

‘Division of labour always has existed in human society, and probably always will. But the question for us is not whether it exists and will exist, but to find a standard by which to see that the division shall be a just one. . . .

‘It is time to come to oneself, and look around.

‘For we are, indeed, nothing but Scribes and Pharisees who have seated ourselves in Moses’ seat and taken the keys of the kingdom of heaven, neither entering in ourselves nor allowing others to enter. . . .

‘Only when I began to look on myself as a man like all others, did my path become plain to me. Following that path, one must try first of all to feed oneself honestly; that is to say, learn not to live on the necks of others but take every opportunity to serve others with hands, feet, brain, heart, and all the powers one possesses and on which others make demands. No one possesses any rights or privileges, or can possess them, but only endless and unlimited duties and obligations; and the first and most undoubted of these duties is, to share in the struggle with nature to obtain support for one’s own life and that of others. . . . Other activities become legitimate only when this prime demand is satisfied.

‘To the question, Would manual labour not absorb all my time and prevent my doing the mental work I love, to which I am accustomed, and which I some-



times consider useful? I received a most unexpected reply. The energy of my mental work increased, and increased in proportion to my bodily exertions.

'As to health, I was warned by leading medical authorities that hard physical exertion at my age would injure my health; but the harder I worked the stronger, fitter, happier and kindlier I felt.

'When I came to understand the position, it seemed to me ludicrous that by a long train of doubts and searchings, I should have reached the wonderful truth that man has eyes in order to see, legs in order to walk, and hands and a back in order to work; and that if he does not use them for their natural purpose he will suffer for it. . . .

' . . . Formerly men took the labour of others simply by violence—slavery; in our day we do it by means of property.

'Property to-day is the root of all evil: of the sufferings of those who possess it or are deprived of it, the reproaches of conscience of those who misuse it, and the danger of collision between those who have a superfluity and those who are in need.

'States and Governments intrigue and go to war for property: the banks of the Rhine, land in Africa, China, or the Balkan Peninsula. Bankers, traders, manufacturers, and landowners work, scheme, and torment themselves and others for property; officials and artisans struggle, cheat, oppress, and suffer for the sake of property; our Law Courts and police defend property; and our penal settlements and prisons, and all the horrors of our so-called repression of crime, exist on account of property.

'Property is the root of all evil; the division and safeguarding of property occupies the whole world. . . .

'The time will soon come, it is already coming, when

it will be shameful to wear on a workday, clothes, boots, or gloves in which one cannot work ; or to play on a piano costing £120 or even £5, while others have to work for us ; or to feed a dog on milk and white bread, while there are people who have no bread and milk ; or to burn lights except to work by, or to burn a fire on which no food is being cooked, while there are people who have no light or no fire. To such a view of life we are inevitably and rapidly approaching.' . . .

In the last chapter of the book Tolstoy states the view he then held (1886) on woman's duty, and the fact that he changed his mind a year or two later does not deprive his statement of interest, for here—as all through the book—one is aware of the throb of his pulse and feels he is speaking of things that touched his own life, and were in question between his wife and himself.

He delivers a scornful denunciation of 'that astonishing nonsense, called Woman's Rights.' Woman's real work is to bear children ; not to imitate those men of the privileged classes who shirk real work and substitute sham work in banks, ministries, universities, academies and studios.

'Within my memory,' says Tolstoy, 'woman's fall—her evasion of her duty—has begun, and within my memory this evasion has been, and is being, more and more practised.

'Woman, having forgotten her law, has believed that her strength lies in the fascination of her allurements, or in her dexterity in imitating the sham work done by man.

'Children are a hindrance to both these things. And so, with the help of science (science is always ready to do anything nasty), within my recollection it has come about that among the wealthy classes a dozen ways of

preventing conception have appeared, and customary appliances of the toilet have become tools for producing sterility. . . .

‘ Every woman, however she may dress herself and whatever she may call herself and however refined she may be, who refrains from childbirth without refraining from sexual relations, is a whore. And however fallen a woman may be, if she intentionally devotes herself to bearing children, she performs the best and highest service in life—fulfils the will of God—and no one ranks above her.

‘ If you are such a woman, you will not, either after two or after twenty children, say that you have borne enough, any more than a fifty-year-old workman will say he has worked enough, while he still eats and sleeps and has muscles demanding work.’

The book closes with a panegyric of the fruitful mother, who knows that real life is a matter of danger and effort and self-sacrifice, and who will guide humanity in the path of duty, service and unselfishness.

Tolstoy’s views on the duty of women and on the relations of the sexes will be dealt with when we come to his *Kreutzer Sonata*, but this chapter is the fitting place for some comment on his economic views.

*What Then Must We Do?* is a work of first-rate importance because of the frankness and freshness with which it treats the most pressing practical problem of our time—that of poverty—about which the Churches and political parties are so strangely impotent and dumb.

Tolstoy’s indictment, that masked slavery exists among us, is unanswerably true. His feeling that this is unendurable is one which grows stronger and reaches more people every year ; and no modern book has done

more than *What Then Must We Do?* to make it prevail. This feeling lies at the root of the industrial unrest now pervading the world and threatening the whole fabric of society. Tolstoy declared that the injustice of existing social conditions must be ended, and that the most inspiring work any one can do is to help to end them.

But how? Tolstoy felt the facts of poverty acutely, described them vividly, and conveyed his moral condemnation strongly; but did he find a key to the enigma?

His prescription is that all should live barely, working hard at 'bread-labour,' and repudiate any Government that uses physical force to restrain any man. His ideal of life is that lived by some of the best Russian peasants when least interfered with by Government. In his condemnation of wealth, and especially of money, his teaching reminds one of the New Testament, of Francis of Assisi, and of the views held by many of the mediæval saints, but he took little account of the modern thought of the Western world, and I doubt whether he was wise to ignore, or totally condemn, what that world has accomplished during the last century and a half.

In particular he underrates the value of leadership and skilled direction. This was because he held that the captains of industry, the professional men, and the officials, take too much for their services. The enormous advantage of good leadership should however be recognized, even if we hold that the possession of exceptional abilities ought not to entitle a leader to live in luxury while his fellow-men lack necessaries.

## CHAPTER XI

### PLAYS AND COLONIES

**I**N 1886 Anton Rubinstein, whom Tolstoy greatly admired, and ranked above all the pianists he had heard, was giving one of his last concerts in Moscow, and Tolstoy was torn by conflicting emotions. He wanted to hear Rubinstein play, but disapproved of expenditure of money and time on art which was not for all, but for the select few. Nevertheless on the eve of the performance he expressed keen regret that he would miss hearing Rubinstein; tickets being by that time quite unobtainable.

This being reported to Rubinstein, the latter gave instructions to have a place arranged for Tolstoy, and himself sent him the ticket. Tolstoy however did not turn up. He had been very pleased to receive the ticket, and had actually put on his overcoat to go to the concert, when suddenly doubts assailed him as to whether he ought to do so. These doubts brought on a nervous attack so severe that a doctor had to be called in.

Early that spring he moved to Yasnaya, but on this, as on several subsequent occasions, his disapproval of railways, his desire not to use money, his love of outdoor exercise, and his wish to be in touch with the life of the people, caused him to walk the 130 miles from Moscow.

One result of Tolstoy's increasing renown was the



frequency with which foreigners as well as Russians began to apply for permission to visit Yasnaya and sought to secure his advocacy for this or that scheme they were interested in.

Among them was Déroulède, the French soldier-poet-patriot, who had come to promote a Franco-Russian alliance against Germany, with revenge for 1871 and the restitution of Alsace-Lorraine as its chief aims. He received but scant encouragement from the author of *The Gospel in Brief*.

Anna Seuron says : ' War and revenge were Chinese literature to the Count, and a single twitch of his lips, and a single flash from his steel eyes, were enough for Déroulède to understand that he must give some other explanation of his visit than his desire to ally Russia with France for a war of revenge ; and he fell back on his ardent desire " to make the acquaintance of Russia's literary luminary." . . .

' Once only did the Count condescend to expatiate on the horrors of war. He himself, under a night sky, had seen on a battle-field thousands of motionless, glassy-eyed corpses which looked as though they were demanding an account from those who had sent them to premature death. . . . When Déroulède remarked that war is implanted in the very nature of man, the Count replied that " War should, and could, be avoided ; and the chief thing is that there should not be men willing to evoke and provoke it " ; and thereupon he rose and left the room with rapid steps.'

Subsequently he proposed to his visitor that they should lay before an ordinary, typical peasant the plan that the French and the Russians, being on each side of the Germans, should unite to squeeze the juice out of them. On the matter being explained to him, the peasant, after scratching his head, replied that he

thought the Frenchmen and the Russians had better first do some useful work, and then go off together to the inn for a drink, and take the Germans with them.

About the same time the author Danilevsky visited Tolstoy. He has recorded the latter's remarks about manual labour: 'For me, daily exercise and physical labour are as indispensable as the air. Sedentary intellectual work without physical exercise and labour is a real calamity. If for a single day I do not walk, or work with my legs and hands, I am good for nothing by evening.'

It was at this time (1886) that Tolstoy wrote several of his best tales for the people: *How Much Land Does a Man Need?*, *Ilyas*, *The Three Hermits*, and the excellent temperance story, *The Imp and the Crust*, as well as *Ivan the Fool*,<sup>1</sup> into which last he has compressed a large part of his philosophy of life. This story he read to some of the peasants and, having asked one of them to retell the tale in his own words, took many hints from him and incorporated them in the story.

'I always do that,' said he. 'I learn how to write from them, and test my work on them. That is the only way to produce stories for the people. My story *God Sees the Truth*<sup>1</sup> was made that way. It was retold me by one of my pupils.'

Besides the help he got from peasants and school-boys, Tolstoy also received assistance from peasant women. There was one old woman, Anisya, from a neighbouring village, who used to come to see Tolstoy and tell him tales; and he used to delight both in her stories and in her way of telling them, and would say: 'You are a real master, Anisya! Thank you for teaching me to speak Russian—and to think Russian!'

<sup>1</sup> All these are included in *Twenty-three Tales*.

It is difficult to decide to what extent Tolstoy influenced the mind of Russia on certain points and to what extent he simply voiced that mind; but it is noteworthy that when he wrote *The Imp and the Crust* (on intemperance) the Government was drawing a huge revenue from drink, Russia was universally regarded as a drunken nation, and hardly any writer denounced the evil. Tolstoy had a way of seeing what was important and of using his art to influence the feelings of men. He now called attention to this evil in a series of short works, and though they provoked opposition at the time it is an indication of his influence that when, less than thirty years later, the sale of vodka was prohibited in Russia, so well had the public mind been prepared for the measure that it was heartily welcomed and proved most beneficial. His propagandist stories had sold to the peasants by millions.

His other writings on the same subject were the two short plays: *The First Distiller* and *The Cause of it All* (the latter published posthumously); *Culture's Holiday* (1889), a philippic against the way in which the Moscow University Anniversary was celebrated; and *Why Do Men Stupify Themselves?* (1890), an essay on the subject of stimulants and intoxicants.

Field work, visitors, correspondence, family matters, philippics and stories for the people did not suffice to exhaust Tolstoy's energies. His new faith seemed to quadruple his mental vigour without impairing his physical powers.

In March 1886 he finished *The Death of Ivan Ilyich*, a remarkable story of the life and death of a Judge, who, at the very end of his fatal illness, realizes the futility of his past life and the joy of self-surrender for the sake of others.

Before the summer was over, Tolstoy himself was seriously ill with erysipelas, resulting from a sore on his leg. In spite of the pain it gave him when ploughing, he long refused to pay attention to his ailment. But at last the Countess, realizing the danger of further delay, went to Moscow and persuaded an acquaintance, Dr. Chirkov, to accompany her at once to Yasnaya. Owing to his dislike of doctors and medicine Tolstoy received Chirkov with great dissatisfaction. The latter mildly reproached him for disregarding in practice the law of love of one's neighbour which he professed. After that things went better, and the doctor was allowed to examine the ulcer which had formed on the patient's leg. Tolstoy's temperature had risen to 104 degrees, the leg was much swollen, and his life was in imminent danger. A drainage-tube had to be inserted immediately, and this proved a very painful operation.

Days of great suffering followed, till one by one the pieces of decayed bone had come away. The patient had to lie up for nine weeks, and for a month was not allowed to engage in any literary occupation.

Anna Seuron remarks: 'The Countess was an excellent nurse, especially during the early and most critical days; she was always in good spirits and extremely quick, perhaps even too quick, for when a man is seriously ill he prefers quiet movements.'

During this illness Tolstoy (who had taken an interest in the drama when he lived in Petersburg and Moscow as a young man) wrote a play. At first he dictated it to his wife, but when it became possible to move him on to a sofa he demanded a writing-board, pen and paper.

Anna Seuron continues: 'When their father wrote, the whole family went on tiptoe. Throwing his head



back on the leather cushion, he often dropped his pencil, and his face expressed a double kind of suffering. He was creating the drama, *The Power of Darkness*.'

That terrible play was founded on a case that had come before the Tula Law Courts. It exhibits the worst side of peasant life : crime leading on to crime in a crescendo of horrors until, towards the end, in a very powerful scene, a drunken fellow, an ex-soldier, inspires Nikita with courage ; and in the last act, at a wedding and in the presence of a police officer, the latter publicly confesses his misdeeds.

These scenes, when well rendered, entirely obliterate the impression of what has gone before. We forget that the story deals with adultery, poison and infanticide ; only the impression of the repentance and confession remains.

Of this work Tolstoy remarked : ' When I am writing a novel I paint, and, so to say, work with a brush. There I feel freer. When it comes out awkwardly I can change it, add colour, and amplify. But a drama is different ; . . . it is sculptor's work. It has no shadows and half-tones. All must be clear-cut and in strong relief. The incidents must be ready, fully ripened, and the whole work lies in representing these fully-matured moments, these ripe moods of the characters. This is exceedingly difficult, especially when dealing with the life of peasants, which is a foreign land to us—another hemisphere ! '

*The Power of Darkness* possesses in a remarkable degree the essential qualities of a first-rate acting play. It has movement, life, and the clear clash of wills from which the actions follow inevitably. Its public performance was long prohibited in Russia, but it eventually became a stock piece at the principal theatres, and is recognized as one of the most powerful



Russian plays. It achieved great success in Paris and Berlin, but it has never yet been publicly performed in England or America.

Having mentioned the two first of Tolstoy's published plays (both written when he was fifty-eight) I will for convenience sake here speak also of his other dramatic works, though they were not written till later.

On 30th December 1889 his next play, *Fruits of Culture*, was performed with great success by his children and their friends at Yasnaya Polyana (his five eldest children were then from 18 to 26 years old). The play was afterwards very well received in the theatres of Russia and abroad. It is the most humorous of all Tolstoy's works, a bright brisk comedy and a capital acting play. Its chief drawback is that it has a cast of some thirty speaking characters, which makes it somewhat expensive to produce.

The only other published plays of Tolstoy's are three posthumous dramas. The best of them, dramatically, is *The Live Corpse*. Unfortunately it is not easy to produce owing to the numerous changes of scene. The second of them, *The Cause of it All*, has already been mentioned among his temperance works. The last play, *The Light Shines in Darkness*, was left incomplete, but is of considerable autobiographical interest. It presents the difficulties and sufferings Tolstoy endured owing to the difference between his own and his wife's outlook on life. Many of the details and characters are drawn very closely from life, but he has simplified his own complex personality and intensified the conflict, for the purpose of the drama.

These last three plays were written long after the period we have been dealing with. His collected

*Plays* are published by Constable & Co., London, and Funk & Wagnalls, New York.

Returning to the year 1886, I would mention that at this time 'Tolstoy Colonies' were springing up in various parts of Russia. To follow the fortunes of these would take me too far; but, speaking generally, they failed; and besides inflicting privations on those who joined them, occasioned much quarrelling. Later on, similar Colonies were started in England, Holland, and the United States, with a like result. The experience of these communities has been instructive, and throws much light on certain phases of Tolstoy's teaching.

I once asked him what value he set on his tale of early Christian life, *Walk in the Light while there is Light*, which was written about this time, though not published till 1893, and he replied, 'I never hear it mentioned without feeling ashamed.' The characters in it are divided into two groups: the bad heathen, and the good Christians. In real life these would inevitably, Tolstoy said, have merged and overlapped. The ideas which found expression in that story had much to do with the founding of the Tolstoy Colonies.

Behind all Tolstoy's denunciation of property-holding, Governments, specialization of labour, etc., there always lies the implication that, if these things did not exist, people would live harmoniously and morally. Those who believed this, naturally asked: 'How then are we to arrange our lives?' One answer Tolstoy gave was, 'Go, and live as peasants with the peasants!' But when educated men tried to do this, they usually came to the conclusion that those were not the surroundings in which they could do their best work. Another suggestion Tolstoy made is that contained in *Walk in the Light while there is Light*—

namely, to form a Community holding early Christian views, and share all things in common.

It was when the Colonies got to work that the defects of Tolstoyism as a constructive policy became obvious. The preliminary inconsistencies—the buying or hiring of land, for instance—could be passed over as evils incidental to the transition from a bad life to a good one; but the insurmountable difficulty arose from the fact that those who took to Colony-life were for the most part people who disregarded, and disapproved of, the regulations enacted either by Church or State. To them Civil and Criminal Law was an abomination. They had broken away from the customary rules of life in order to guide their lives by the dictates of reason and conscience. There was no longer any accepted routine to guide them; and when they turned to Tolstoy for help, his teaching did not supply what was needed.

The root error of Tolstoyism is that it disdains and contemns the experience gained by our forefathers, who devised a system which, in spite of many defects that hamper it, has made it possible for men to co-operate practically and to carry on their diverse works without excessive friction.

A great stumbling-block in the Tolstoy Colonies proved to be the law of Non-Resistance, which condemns all use of physical force to prevent any one from doing what he likes. It is true that wonderful things have frequently been accomplished by men and women who relied on forces higher than the physical, and used moral or mental suasion in place of brute violence. Stated *comparatively*, the propositions that it is better to use persuasion than force, and that mind is greater than matter, are excellent. But Non-Resistance occasioned harm when a man or a community

adopted it as a rigid rule, and thereby deprived himself or itself of the power to check obvious wrongs in what was sometimes the only way they could be checked.

Without attempting a history of the Tolstoy Colonies, I may mention one typical instance of the way in which they broke down.

It occurred in the Schaveevsky Colony in the Province of Smolensk. The Colonists adopted a neglected youngster and took him to live with them. He listened to their discussions, readings and conversations, and learnt that no physical force should be used with any one, that it is wrong to possess property, and that no Colonist should have anything to do with the police or the Law Courts. One morning the Colonist who had special charge of the lad awoke and began to dress, but could not find his waistcoat, until at last he discovered that the boy was wearing it. The Colonist asked for the waistcoat, but the boy refused to give it up. The man explained how wrong it is to steal, but the boy could not see the point of the argument. If property is wrong, why was it any more wrong for a boy to have it than for a man? The other Colonists were gradually drawn into the dispute, and as it developed it became apparent that the whole battery of Tolstoy's arguments concerning property and judging, as well as his insistence on condoning all offences, claiming no rights, and acknowledging only duties, were on the boy's side in the controversy. He was accusing no one; and was therefore able to assume a tone of moral superiority. He wanted the waistcoat as much as the man did. He was quite willing to discuss the subject; but it was impossible to alter his determination to keep the waistcoat, or his opinion that it was wrong of any one

to want to take it from him. That particular waistcoat might not have mattered ; but the question at stake was, whether any one might rely on retaining anything : a pen, a tool, or even a book he had begun to write ? It was a question of principle, going to the root of the possibility of working efficiently, or of co-operating. The incident showed up the fact that the Colonists did not know what they really approved or disapproved of, and it accounts for the subsequent failure of their undertaking. It further showed that by undermining the bases of Church and State, Tolstoy had unwittingly tunnelled much further and endangered the very bases of any possible code or of any fixed agreement between man and man. If we accept all he has said as valid, any lunatic, drunkard, wayward child or angry man may block the traffic in Cheapside indefinitely ; and it would not need many such people to plunge a whole community into chaos.

For other instances of the failure of Colonies I must refer the reader to my *Life of Tolstoy*.

It seems strange that Tolstoy did not learn more from the experience of the Colonies ; but it must be remembered that neither he nor his nearest friends ever joined a Colony ; and Tolstoy was so absorbed in his work, so busily engaged in trying to do good to those with whom he came in immediate contact, and so wrapped up in his own thoughts and feelings, that he was as impervious to the experiences of the Communist Colonists as to those of the Constitutional reformers of the Western World.



## CHAPTER XII

### NON-RESISTANCE

**B**Y 1887 the evolution of Tolstoy's views which had begun more than ten years before was well-nigh completed. His opinions had solidified and, except on the question of sex, did not alter much subsequently, though his mental powers remained at their prime for at least another dozen years.

It was in 1887 that he wrote his important philosophic book *On Life*. We have no satisfactory translation of it, but Mr. Bolton Hall of New York, in a volume entitled *Love, Life and Peace*, has produced a free paraphrase which gives its essence excellently, and was commended by Tolstoy.

In August 1887 Tolstoy's brother-in-law, Behrs, revisited Yasnaya after some years spent in the Caucasus. Tolstoy, he says, had grown older and greyer. 'His face showed evident signs of the serious mental suffering he had endured. He had become the personification of the idea of love of one's neighbour and, if I may be allowed a paradox, I should say that for the sake of those views he sinned against them: as, for instance, when he was severe with people who misbehaved. . . . He had ceased to concern himself about his sons' education, and was displeased that his wife still attended to it. When his eldest son had taken his degree at the University and asked

advice about a future career, his father advised him to go as workman to a peasant.'

Anna Seuron, speaking of the same period, says : ' One cannot say that the Count paid much attention to his children's education. On the contrary he often spoke against instruction, though he considered it quite natural that they should know everything. And it so happened that, in the event, the eldest daughter took to painting and the eldest son became a good musician. In general, thanks to tutors and governesses, all the children received a more or less good education.'

Behrs continues : ' Concerning his relation to his property, he told me that he had wished to free himself from it, . . . but had acted wrongly, at first, in wishing to throw the burden on to others ; that is to say, he tried to insist on distributing it, and thereby caused another evil—namely, an energetic protest from, and the serious discontent of, his wife. . . . Not wishing to oppose his wife by force, he abandoned the attempt to transfer the burden to others, and adopted the plan of ignoring his property : refused to have anything to do with it, or to care about its fate, and ceased to make use of it, except that he continued to live in the house at Yasnaya Polyana. Disapproving in principle of giving money in alms (since every coin is a means of enslaving our fellows) he yet considered it impossible to refuse to use money while his family continued to use his estate. My sister told me that they give away from Rs. 2000 to Rs. 3000 (£200 to £300) every year to the poor.'

Behrs tells us Tolstoy ' mentioned young Prince D. A. Hilkov to me, as an example. Hilkov had not been personally acquainted with Tolstoy, nor probably with his teaching ; yet almost simultaneously with

its publication, disregarding his connections and rank, the young Prince gave his lands to the peasants and retained only about 25 acres for himself.' This same Prince Hilkov subsequently took part in organizing the Doukhobor Migration.

Behrs tells us further of Tolstoy : ' He is still regarded with deep loyalty and sincere love by his whole family, which, as the proverb has it, " looks him in the eye." They also all feel great respect for his genius.

' There is, however, in his relation to his wife, a shade of exactingness and reproach, or even dissatisfaction. He accuses her of preventing him from giving away his property, and of continuing to educate the children in the old way.

' His wife, for her part, considers that she has acted rightly, and is vexed at this attitude of his. She has been the closest witness of all his spiritual sufferings, and in general of the gradual development of his thoughts, and in consequence has again and again had to suffer on her husband's account. She has involuntarily developed a dread and abhorrence of his teaching and its consequences. . . . The saying " Between two fires " fails to describe her position between her husband's spiritual sufferings and demands on the one side, and the impossibility, with her views and for the sake of the children, of submitting to those demands on the other. On her alone, during a whole decade, was his theory tested and amended during its slow growth ; and the result has been that a tone of contradiction has arisen between them, in which mutual reproach makes itself heard. That is the only ground on which disagreement has occurred ; in all other respects they are now, as formerly, a model couple.

' On one occasion she said to me, with tears in her

eyes : " It is hard for me now ; I have to do everything, whereas formerly I was only his assistant. The property and the education of the children are all on my hands. And I am blamed for attending to them and not going about as a beggar ! . . . He has forgotten everything for the sake of his teaching ! " "

Some years later (1893) Behrs added, at the end of his book, the following : ' To protect her children's interest, when Tolstoy wanted to give away his estates to outsiders, his wife was prepared to appeal to the authorities to put his property under guardianship. And when her husband offered her his possessions, she accepted a power-of-attorney giving her the management of all his property, except his later works.'

The eldest daughter, Tatiana (now Madame Suhotin), helped her father before her marriage a great deal with his writing and correspondence, and there was always a strong affection between them. ' It is, however, the second daughter,' says Behrs, ' more than all the rest, who is devoted to her father, and, as far as she is allowed, rigorously observes his every rule and maxim.'

This daughter, Mary Lvovna (Masha), who by marriage became Princess Obolensky, studied medicine at one time, and in 1886 we hear of her, ' in print blouse, passing examinations to qualify as a Primary School teacher.' Helping her father with his correspondence, copying his MSS., teaching village children and attending to the sick in the village, she led a life crowded with interests and with work.

After her sisters had married, the youngest daughter, the Countess Alexandra, succeeded them as her father's assistant and typist, and was devoted to him and his ideas.

Speaking to me one day, of trouble he had had with

one of his sons, Tolstoy added: 'I have reason to thank God for my daughters.'

It was in 1887 that he wrote *The Empty Drum* (*Twenty-three Tales*), a folk-tale long current in the region of the Volga, and one after Tolstoy's own heart, expressing the peasant's hatred of military service. His rendering of it is an example of the way in which he voiced feelings current among the people.

Towards the end of 1887 my brother-in-law, Dr. P. S. Alexeyev, returned to Moscow from a visit to America, where he had studied the Temperance movement, which till then had attracted but little attention in Russia. He approached Tolstoy, and the latter was so much interested in the matter that he promptly started a Temperance Society in his own house.

It was Dr. Alexeyev who, in Moscow, one winter day in 1888, first took me to see Tolstoy, with whose works I was at that time but superficially acquainted. We found many people assembled in a large upstairs room, simply furnished with a big table, many chairs, and a grand piano. After a time, being left alone with Tolstoy at the table, I said:

'I understand, Leo Nikolayevich, that you disapprove of all money-getting? That interests me, for I am in Russia to try to earn some money.' He immediately began to explain his views to me. Trying to demonstrate the advantages of the factory-system, I said, 'You will at least admit that it is necessary to have knives?' 'Not so necessary as to have bread,' replied he, and proceeded to insist on the primary duty of each man producing as much and consuming as little as possible. I was not convinced; but was struck by his earnestness and willingness to



explain his views, and the courtesy with which he listened to what one had to say.

At parting he asked me with emphasis to come and see him again. I did not do so until, after reading some of his later books, I had become keenly interested in his views, and wished to consult him on certain points.

Then, and subsequently, he impressed me by his power of vivid, concise and humorous expression, the keenness of his interest in all sorts of things : people, books, information, games and work of all kinds, and especially in matters of spiritual importance, as also by his power of putting people at their ease and getting them to talk on subjects they understood. Whoever might be present, a peasant-author, an artist or a Prince, he had a word for each, and in his presence all were equal. His power of bringing out the best in people and making them conscious of their own worth, was very noticeable.

It was no small thing, in the 'eighties and 'nineties, that there was at least one house in Moscow where people of all sorts and conditions came together under the influence of a man in whom there was nothing base, and who in the days of blackest reaction kept a heart full of hope, and a flaming conviction that iniquity cannot endure and that the present evils were but transitory. Not without cause does Hope rank as a cardinal virtue !

The following remarks by a doctor, who subsequently joined a Tolstoy Colony, throw light on Tolstoy's attitude towards his followers at this time.

' In Tolstoy, a lover of the people and political thinker with a tinge of anarchism is conjoined with a moralist-philosopher seeking a path for a new religion free from all superstition. Tolstoy himself

prized most highly his religio-philosophic ideas. His popularist-political opinions flowed from his religious view of life, but did not occupy the forefront. For us at that time however, it was just those populist and anarchist ideas that were most important, and we did not attach particular weight to his religious views. On this difference all our disputes hinged. We, with our views, could not endure that men who professed to be followers of Tolstoy should continue their former easy way of life. Leo Nikolayevich maintained that the chief thing was to preserve good relations with those about one, and if this involved remaining in the conditions of one's former well-to-do life, it was better to sacrifice one's spiritual peace than to provoke anger and bitterness in those near to one.

'A. B. used to reply to Tolstoy with particular harshness, quoting the Gospel text: "A man's foes shall be they of his own household."—"And if, for the tranquillity of those near me, it is necessary that I should become a burglar—must I do that also?" asked he indignantly. In vain Tolstoy replied that it all depends on the plane of religious consciousness one has reached. We held to our view, and each time we met the dispute flared up afresh.

'Thus two currents of Tolstoyism became more and more distinct. The one, with which our Group sided, might be called the "Back-to-the-people" tendency. The other had more the nature of a religious movement.

'The adherents of that latter movement were spiritually nearer to Tolstoy. He considered that they understood him better; and they, on their part, treated him with great respect, amounting sometimes to veneration. For them, almost every thought he expressed was an unquestioned verity.' [This relates to V. G. Tchertkof and his set.]

' While the " Back-to-the-people " Tolstoyans strove with all their might, and in despite of all hardships, to realize Tolstoy's teaching in their lives, the representatives of the other tendency for the most part did not abandon their former external way of life, except that those who were in the army left the service.

' The Tolstoyans who were near him in religio-philosophic opinions have remained till now faithful to their views, but it has not been so with the others ; very few of them follow the path they started on.' Many of them felt that that path led them naturally to join one of the Revolutionary parties.

' To the scheme for organizing agricultural Colonies for the intelligentsia, Tolstoy was favourable enough ; though, distrusting as he does everything that is artificially arranged, he warned us of the possibility of failure.'

Early in 1890 Semyonov, the peasant-writer, met Tchertkof returning with Gay from Yasnaya where they had been staying. Semyonov says :

' I asked about Tolstoy, and was told that he was well, vigorous, and working. Tchertkof gave no details. He was evidently upset about something, and only from Gay did I learn that things were not going smoothly. " Is that the kind of life he needs ? " said Gay. " He is thinking for the whole human race, but no consideration is paid to his spiritual needs at all. Continual bustle, small demands, all those guests . . . ugh ! "'

' Tchertkof was taking *The Kreutzer Sonata* to Petersburg. It was already circulating in Moscow in lithographed copies, but this was its final revision. *Fruits of Culture* was then just being printed.

' Tchertkof did not approve of such writings [as the comedy, *Fruits of Culture*]. He did not care for works

which lacked a religious tendency. In authorship he demanded religious sermonizing, and lest this should become a trade, he decided that a writer should take no money for his work. "To do so is a sin!" said he. "By writing, we serve mankind and lead their souls out of darkness; but if we take money, it becomes not a service but something very different!" It is, in his opinion, immoral, just as it would be for a man when saving another from drowning to demand money for so doing!

These remarks, addressed by a wealthy man to a peasant who supported his family with difficulty, and whom the few pounds he got for his stories lifted just above actual want, are characteristic. Years later, when one of his colleagues had occasion to remonstrate with Tchertkof on the harshness of his demands, his reply was: 'In our movement we consider principles, not people'; and it was just that lack of consideration for others which dried up the fountains Tolstoy's magic caused to gush forth. Tolstoy inspired enthusiasm, and many people offered him their help in work and money. Not wishing to be diverted from his literary labours, Tolstoy passed on these sympathizers to Tchertkof to be made use of for the movement. But Tchertkof was domineering, unpractical, capricious and unscrupulous, so that the fate of these adherents was generally not a happy one.

On the other hand, there was about Tchertkof at times a rather touching naïveté, shown for instance in his reply to a colleague who (after suffering much annoyance) had detected him in telling untruths and had taxed him therewith. 'Yes,' replied Tchertkof, 'when I want to get my own way very much, I do sometimes say the thing that is not.'

The last of Tolstoy's children, a son, christened



Ivan, was born in March 1888, when Tolstoy was in his sixtieth year, and the Countess in her forty-fourth.

We now come to a matter difficult for a biographer of Tolstoy to deal with. From the time of his conversion onwards he was elaborating a doctrine of Non-Resistance, to the preaching of which he devoted more and more of his energy as he grew older. The doctrine goes so to the root of our social life that it tends to divert attention from everything else Tolstoy said.

He arrived at his theory from the study of the Sermon on the Mount, and especially from verses 38-41 of the fifth chapter of St. Matthew's Gospel :

'Ye have heard that it was said, An eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth ; but I say unto you, Resist not him that is evil : but whosoever smiteth thee on thy right cheek, turn to him the other also. And if any man would go to law with thee, and take away thy coat, let him have thy cloke also.'

In the ultimate form to which Tolstoy developed it, the doctrine of Non-Resistance means that *no physical force must be used to compel any man* to do what he does not want to do, or to make him desist from doing what he chooses. This involves disapproval of all central or local Governments that employ a policeman, of all Criminal or Civil Law proceedings, all collection of rates or taxes not purely voluntary, and of any defence of life or property by physical force.

Tolstoy was delighted to hear of and come in touch with the Rev. Adin Ballou, who was teaching a form of Non-Resistance in America. Of Ballou Tolstoy speaks as 'one of the chief benefactors of humanity,' and he says : 'In his tracts I found all the objections that are generally made against Non-Resistance victoriously answered, and I found also the true basis of



the doctrine.' Yet even Ballou did not go far enough for Tolstoy, who adds: 'The comments that I wish to make on Mr. Ballou's explanation of the doctrine are: First, that I cannot agree with the concession he makes for employing violence against drunkards and insane people. The Master made no concession, and we can make none. . . . A true Christian will always prefer to be killed by a madman, rather than to deprive him of his liberty. Secondly, [I am dissatisfied] that Mr. Ballou does not decide more categorically the question of *property*, for a true Christian not only cannot claim any rights of property, but the term "property" cannot have any significance for him. All that he uses, a Christian only uses till somebody takes it from him. He cannot defend his property, so he cannot have any. Thirdly, I think that for a true Christian the term "government" . . . cannot have any significance and reality. Government is, for a Christian, only regulated violence. Governments, States, nations, property, Churches, all these for a true Christian are only words without meaning; he can understand the meaning other people attach to those words, but for him they have none. . . . No compromise! The Christian principle must be pursued to its full extent, to enable it to support practical life.'

Ballou replied: 'You say, "I cannot agree with the concession . . . for employing violence against drunkards and insane people." . . . You say, "The Master made no concession, and we must make none." . . . But did he ever prohibit the resistance of evil by uninjurious and beneficent forces of any kind, physical or moral? Never! And to construe his precept "Resist not evil," as meaning absolute passivity to all manner of evil because he made no specific quali-

fications, is to ignore the context and make him the author of self-evident absurdity. The context clearly shows what kind of resistance of evil had been sanctioned by law and custom, and what he meant to abrogate. . . .

' You say, " True Christians will always prefer to be killed by a madman rather than to deprive him of his liberty." And by parity of reason . . . I suppose you must say, a true Christian, if watching with a delirious sick man, would prefer to see him kill his wife, children, and best friends, rather than restrain or help restrain him, by uninjurious physical force, of his insane liberty. What precept of Christ makes insane liberty thus sacred? Or what dictate of enlightened reason, humanity, or fraternal love demands such conduct towards the insane ?

' You say, " A true Christian not only cannot claim any rights of property, but the term property cannot have any significance for him ; all that he uses, a Christian only uses until somebody takes it from him." But food, raiment, and shelter are necessities of mortal existence to Christians as human beings. . . . Jesus said, " Seek ye first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added unto you." When they have been " added " to true Christians according to the will of the Father, whose are they ? Are they not the rightful property of those who possess them—to whom God has " added " them—as truly theirs as their bodily faculties, for the just use of which they are morally responsible, and which no human beings have any right to deprive them of by fraud or force ?

' Yet you say, " A true Christian cannot claim any rights of property. . . . All that he uses, a Christian only uses till somebody takes it from him." But has

anybody a right to take it from him at will? Is there no such thing as theft, robbery, extortion, or crime against property, against which a true Christian may protest? On the other hand is there no such thing as a true Christian having any property to give away in alms or charity, according to Christ's injunctions? I do not so understand Christ or the dictates of reason or the law of love.

'You say, "Government is, for a Christian, only regulated violence . . . Government, States, nations, property, Churches—all these, for a true Christian, are only words without meaning," etc. But these are realities; we cannot ignore them as nonentities. They are outgrowths from nature, however crude and defective. Man is a social being by natural constitution. He is not and never can be a solitary, independent, individual being. He must, and will be inevitably more or less a Socialist. Families, Governments, States, nations, Churches, and communities always have existed and always will. No-Governmentism, non-organizationism, sheer individualism, is no part of true Christianity. It is impossible, unnatural—a chaos. We should aim, with our Master, to transform by the moral force of divine, fundamental principles uncompromisingly lived out, all barbaric, semi-barbaric, and unchristian social organizations into his ideal one, the true Church, wherein the greatest are least and all in unity of spirit with him, as he is with the Universal Father. . . . These are my highest convictions of truth and righteousness. . . .'

On 26th March 1890, Tolstoy replied to Ballou: 'DEAR FRIEND AND BROTHER,—I will not argue with your objections. It would lead to nothing. Only one point, that I did not put clearly enough in my last letter, I might explain to avoid misunderstandings. . . .

' The great sin is to compromise in *theory*—to lower the ideal of Christ in order to make it attainable. And I consider the admission of force (be it even benevolent) over a madman (the great difficulty is, to give a strict definition of a madman) to be such a theoretical compromise. In not admitting this compromise I run the risk only of my death, or the death of other men who may be killed by the madman. And death in fulfilling the will of God is a blessing (as you put it yourself in your book) ; but if I admit the compromise, I run the risk of acting quite contrary to the law of Christ—which is worse than death. . . .'

It is interesting to note that Ballou, whom Tolstoy calls ' a champion of Non-Resistance who devoted fifty years of life to its propaganda by word and print,' does not understand Christ's injunction as Tolstoy understands it ; and this brings us to the question : Are we primarily concerned to decide what Jesus taught on the subject, or to decide what is right and wrong about the question itself, independently of what any one may have said, or have been reported to say ?

If it be the former and minor question, it cannot be adequately discussed in this book. I prefer to deal with the larger and simpler problem : What is the right view for us to hold about the use of physical force ?

Tolstoy thinks we should never use physical force to restrain our fellow-men. (He sometimes incidentally remarked that this should apply to animals also.) His view has one great advantage over Ballou's, for if he be right we have a quite clear, rigid and *mechanical* test of right and wrong. You need not go into motives—which are complex and baffling—nor need you ask who has forged or slain or stolen ; the mere fact that one man is holding another, or employing

the law to hold him, shows at once that the man who holds is a wrong-doer, and that the man who is held is a victim of anti-Christian violence. It has only two disadvantages: first, that it throws all human affairs into confusion, and secondly, that it is wrong.

The sound doctrine of Non-Resistance I take to be this—and I ask my readers to weigh it as a matter of first-rate importance:

The old law of 'an eye for an eye,' and the desire to give a man 'two black eyes for being blind,' is not merely wrong, but also stupid. By desiring to injure others we inevitably injure ourselves. We should obliterate from our minds *all* feeling of revenge, and should not wish to injure any one, not even a homicidal maniac. If we can cure him, and make a good citizen of him, so much the better; but there may be cases in which it is best regretfully to kill him, not 'because he deserves it,' nor because we wish to hurt him but, for instance, to prevent his steering a ship on to the rocks and causing all the passengers and crew to perish as well as himself. Our business is, as much as we can, to promote harmony, goodwill and good order among all men. In doing that, we need all our faculties, moral, mental and physical; and there is no external rule of conduct that can safely be applied to relieve us of the responsibility of using our judgment—even in complex and difficult cases about which we cannot be sure that our judgment is right.

This principle is clear and *always* applicable, and the more fully and immediately it is applied the better. The true contrast is not between injuring our fellows or renouncing the use of physical force; it is between wishing to injure and wishing to aid.

Tolstoy's test applies to the action; this other test applies to the motive.



I deal further with this subject in the next chapter, and devote so much space to it because the published replies to Tolstoy on this point have, for the most part, been very inadequate and inefficient, and the matter is too important to be left in confusion.

I believe that Tolstoy's theory of Non-Resistance obscured the recognition of his greatness as a thinker. It was excusable, and perhaps inevitable, that a strenuous man, opposing great evils, should sometimes lose his balance and write things Tom, Dick and Harry can see to be wrong ; but though Tolstoy made such blunders we should not on that account let our attention be too long diverted from the many profound things he said at other times with admirable force and lucidity.

We should use our prophets as we use our mines, seeking and valuing the veins of rich ore, and wasting as little time as possible on the sand and earth we encounter in our search. But to do this we must learn to *discriminate*, and to separate the gold from the sand : a task which cannot always be quickly or easily accomplished.

## CHAPTER XIII

### A CRITICISM

**I**N reading Tolstoy's didactic works one is impressed by the importance of the topics he treats of, the frankness of his statements, the boldness of his conclusions, and his marvellous power of clear and popular exposition. Practical experience however ultimately obliges us to admit that there are some aspects of his teaching which it is a duty to challenge.

It is just these parts on which Tolstoyans often insist most strenuously: for instance, on the statement that the use of physical force to restrain one's fellow-man is always wrong, and that the possession of private property is immoral.

Experience inclines one to suspect that there is a flaw somewhere in these opinions, and in real life I have known people who abandoned their property without abandoning their selfishness, and others who retained control of property chiefly to administer it as a trust for the good of others.

Tolstoy challenges the right of Governments to kill men or to deprive them of liberty, and asks: 'How can people, by calling themselves a Government, make actions moral which would admittedly be immoral if done not by a Government but by other people?' He says the Gospels condemn private pro-

perty and the use of force, and he relies not merely on certain texts, but on the whole tendency of the Gospel narrative, which, he says, bears out those texts. It is certainly true that for thousands of years these ideas have reappeared again and again, propounded by good men and influencing large movements, and that they have seldom been refuted in any convincing fashion.

Once the first axiom (that physical force should never be used between man and man) is accepted, the whole Tolstoyan scheme is consistent and logically irrefutable; there is no subsequent flaw in his argument against Government, law courts and property.

The evils of imperialism, militarism and commercial competition, with the contrasts of wealth and poverty, are moreover so apparent and men's consciences are so moved to revolt, that even had Tolstoy never spoken thoughts such as his would assuredly have found expression in our day. They stand on record in history and never quite die out of men's minds, though in modern times they have never before received such emphatic, systematic or world-wide proclamation as he gave them. Where, then, is the weak point in his position? Why do these principles retire into the background after each fresh trial? What became of the communism of the early Church? What became of the Franciscan movement? Why did W. L. Garrison support the re-election of President Lincoln, who was waging a great war? And why do 'Tolstoy Colonies' always fail? Why, in a word, is experience against a theory that is so plausible and appeals so strongly to the hearts of men?

Here let us first remove a stumbling-block from our path. We want to use our minds upon a perplexing problem, but almost before we have begun to do so we are in danger of being crushed by authority. Jesus,

we are told, said so-and-so, and by these words meant so-and-so; the question is therefore settled in advance and settled beyond appeal.

I am however not willing to abandon the investigation of the subject at the very outset. But instead of plunging into disputes as to the authority of the Gospels, or the meaning of certain words, or even as to the real drift and tendency of Christ's whole teaching and the emphasis to be laid on this or that part of it (disputes needing many volumes and not likely to terminate in our lifetime), I prefer to deal directly with the subject in hand.

I admit that Tolstoy's views on Government and property are more or less distinctly discernible in the Gospels (though not there pushed to the front, or weighted with such corollaries as he deduces). But I plead that we must still be allowed to believe what seems to us reasonable, and to disbelieve what seems to us unreasonable.

If a cabbage from a certain seed, under certain conditions, after a certain number of days' growth, ought to be ten but is actually only eight inches high, still it is better to let it continue to grow from its own roots than to cut it off, perch it on a stick, and make it at once ten inches high. For when you have severed it from its own roots it never can grow any more. Similarly it is better that each man should use his own reason and conscience on such problems as we are considering, rather than accept a conclusion on grounds of authority: not because his mind is better than any one else's, but because it is his own. There is nothing presumptuous in breathing with one's own lungs, even though they be not as powerful as other people's; nor is it presumptuous to think with one's own head, for it is the only head one can think with.

Venturing then, undeterred by authority, to face this problem, I will try to put my case so clearly that if I err some one may correct me and bring us nearer to the true solution.

In a letter Tolstoy wrote to the Doukhobors he gave an admirably concise and precise summary of his anti-property and anti-force opinions, and urged their adoption. The Doukhobors's story must be deferred to a later chapter, but I will use their case to illustrate my argument.

In that letter, Tolstoy gave an excellent maxim of economic morality, namely, that each man should 'work as much as possible, and content himself with as little as possible.' In a world in which want exists, the more this saying is considered the better. But why should he assume that the institution of private property is immoral, and that communal property (which he was commending) is moral? Whence could the Doukhobors obtain a moral right to withhold their land from other settlers who would like to take it? If private property represents the selfishness of an individual, surely communal property must represent the selfishness of a community. And (to use Tolstoy's own words) the only possibility of defending what they consider theirs, is 'by violence, that is (in case of need) by a struggle, a fight, or even by murder.' 'The Christian teaching cannot be taken piecemeal; it is all or nothing.'

It follows from Tolstoy's axioms, that if a Leader, entrusted with the Doukhobors's earnings, were to go to town to pay off their debts and buy goods for the coming season, and if he were there met by some one who asked for the money in order to gamble with it, it would be his duty to hand it over; for Christ said: 'give to him that asketh of thee'; and, according



to Tolstoy, 'the Christian teaching cannot be taken piecemeal!' Moreover, 'if our property is not taken from us, this occurs only because people think that we, like others, shall defend it. Therefore to acknowledge property is to acknowledge violence and murder.' It follows even more definitely from the Tolstoyan law that if in such a case as I have imagined some one snatched the Doukhobor money from the Leader, the latter should neither snatch it back again nor set the police to catch the thief.

Tolstoy, who shrank from no logical consequence of his axioms, would no doubt have granted that communal property (if a step better than private property) had no rights, and that the Doukhobors ought to be perfectly ready to abandon their land to any settlers who like to claim it.

But here, at last, one has to challenge the very axioms from which Tolstoy starts. What evidence is there that the use of physical force to restrain one's fellow-man is wrong when not used maliciously or wantonly? How does Tolstoy know that the motive for the possession of property is always selfish? I am ready to grant that the use of physical force is *so often* prompted by malice, and the use of property is *so often* selfish, that a strong presumption has arisen in many minds, to the effect that malice and selfishness are the sole ground for these things. But axioms must not be accepted without strict examination; for the root of much perplexity lies in such acceptance.

Tolstoy was so bent on checking the malevolent and harmful use of force and the selfish use of property, that he condemned the whole institution of human laws and Governments, forgetting the debt of gratitude humanity owes to the high-minded and public-spirited men: the Pymys, Hampdens, Lincolns and Wilsons,

to whom it owes institutions which, rightly used, make easy of attainment further reforms that without them would be almost unattainable. Is it not time we began to recognize the healthy root which enables the institutions of human law and property to survive the attacks directed against them ?

If it were true (as is often assumed) that our property system rests simply and solely on a basis of selfishness, the Tolstoyan case would be valid. The real justification for that *definiteness in making use of material objects* which is the real essence of the so-called 'rights of property' lies in the fact that *definiteness tends to facilitate harmony among men*. If a man makes a spade and it is recognized to be his, he can use it (selfishly or unselfishly), or can give it to a man who needs it, or can lend it to some one for a definite time or on definite conditions. In a word, human intercourse and human co-operation are *facilitated* by the existence of a common understanding which does not need to be thrashed out afresh at each new transaction. If any one wants the spade, he knows he must go to the owner for it. But suppose 'no property' principles were prevalent (and I have seen this operating in a Tolstoy colony), you would have causes of discord multiplied a hundred-fold. The man has then 'no right' to the spade he made, or to the book he wrote. Consequently he has no right to give it away, for he cannot confer a right he does not possess. Neither can he lend what is not his. Any one may come and walk off with it, leaving him unable to finish his work, and he is even deprived (by this queer moral code) of the right to complain. He at once puts himself in the wrong by wishing to assert that he ever had a right to anything !

A young man I knew (let me call him *A*) adopted 'no property' principles. Another young man spent

the few hundred pounds he possessed in buying land for 'no property' people to live on. Quarrels, bitterness and waste of time and energy were the immediate result, simply because of the indefiniteness of the arrangement. Little by little the colonists (who had hoped to set an example to mankind) had to learn—what mankind has to relearn as often as the truth is forgotten—the need of definiteness in human arrangements if our efforts are to result in benefits either for ourselves or for others. *A* ultimately settled down in the practical possession of a piece of land he cultivated; but he still held to his 'no property' ideas. He happened to be fond of flowers and took pride in a flower-bed he planted and tended. Arguing with *B* (a fellow-colonist), *A* maintained that the flower-bed was not his own property. 'Then any one may claim it who likes?' said *B*. 'Yes,' replied *A*. 'Well, then, I claim it, and will walk on it,' remarked *B*, and proceeded to trample down the flowers. *B*, of course, acted badly, but *A*, it seems to me, was also to blame for lack of definiteness. It comes ultimately to this, that two men cannot both eat the same piece of bread, and there is no moral gain in pretending you do not claim the bread you eat.

Tolstoy, in his eagerness to cure the terrible evils that result from selfishness, became reckless about conserving what is good in the present order of society. He did not value those results of past efforts expended in the right direction, which have become sacred to us because they are so human and pathetic. In this respect he was like the nurse who poured out the baby when emptying its bath.

To defend itself against the disintegrating forces of which Tolstoyism is a striking example, human society must learn to recognize and respect what is noble,

healthy and heroic in itself, and must cease to regard its baser elements as the cement that holds it together.

If it is a moral duty to promote concord among men, it is certainly a moral duty to make definite arrangements about property. It is true that no external arrangements the ingenuity of man can devise will secure peace and harmony among obstinate, wilful and inconsiderate people. But definite arrangements *tend* to make it easier for any set of men to avoid friction, and easier for them to co-operate harmoniously together. That human arrangements are imperfect is not a reason for rejecting them, but rather for continually improving them.

The advantage, whether of individualism or of communism, can never be a question of 'all or nothing,' but must always be a question of more or less. Reasonable men must devise and insist on definite arrangements, and anarchism only looks plausible when it comes as a reaction against despotism.

Tolstoy always meant to be entirely honest, but so strong was his bias that, as George Moore once said, he 'sacrifices truth to theory.' He values morality, but sacrifices morality for the sake of his theory. Stead once asked Tolstoy whether he would use force to prevent a drunken man kicking a child to death. Tolstoy, after reflection, wrote a reply saying that not even in such a case should evil be resisted by force. But this decision outrages one's conscience. George Moore puts the case excellently as follows: 'If you were to say to Tolstoy, "I am willing to live in obedience to a moral standard; but which moral standard, for there are so many?" he would answer, "There is but one, and that one you will find in the Gospels."' "But how do I know that the Gospels are true? You yourself are forced to make a selection of Christ's



teachings." " My interpretation of Christ's teaching is a true one, for it is in agreement with the voice of conscience which you hear speaking within you." But no man's conscience tells him that he should not use force to prevent a drunkard from kicking a child to death !'

Tolstoy condemns all civil and criminal courts of justice ; and their defects, in England as well as in Russia, are obvious enough to make the condemnation plausible. But again experience shows wherein the great value of law lies. It may often fail to render justice, but at least it obliges men to face the light of publicity, and by the decision of an impartial third party it settles many a dispute which would otherwise continue indefinitely. Neither side can refuse to have its case examined ; and even if the decision arrived at be sometimes unjust, it is still a decision. In reality an enormous number of cases are settled every day (without going to law at all) by simply ascertaining what the law is. Many agreements are concluded voluntarily, because the more cantankerous of the disputants is aware that by refusing a fair arrangement he cannot prevent some impartial settlement from being arrived at. In a word, the healthy root which enables juridical institutions to survive in spite of their many defects, is the fact that without them quarrels would be more frequent and harmony more difficult to attain than is now the case.

Some one has said of Sir Henry Maine that he ' never sacrificed the *complexity* of organic evolution to unity of conception and clearness of exposition. Whatever his failings, he undoubtedly possesses the merits of an Englishman in his search for *the meaning of life as it really is.*' Much of Tolstoy's work is on the contrary marked by an apparent obliviousness of the complexity



of social problems. He learnt by personal experience, but was impatient of the more complex lessons of social experience. Yet it is a social, and not a merely personal, morality that claims us to-day, and if we are asked to accept new rules we wish to test them by experience. It is this characteristic of English thought which makes it difficult to secure adequate appreciation for Tolstoy's views among us. We sympathize with his aims and detest the things he detests, yet we cannot but question some of his sweeping generalizations. But because his views are not all right, they are not therefore all wrong ; and the service he renders us is the greater because he approaches life from another side, and helps us to see it through other eyes.

He has not merely stated some great problems soundly and well, nor merely stated some important fallacies so powerfully that he almost compels us to find the right replies, but, above all, he has faced the fundamental problems of life and morality with a courage, a frankness, and an inspiring confidence in the efficacy of moral and intellectual effort, to which it is hard to find a parallel in modern literature. An Englishman is usually so specialized and restricted in his outlook, so absorbed in 'the tare on tallow,' on winning the next election, or on framing a workable compromise among different groups, that he seldom even tries to face the great problems Tolstoy deals with and makes so attractive. And it is invaluable to be made to feel that such problems can be, and are being, dealt with—however unworkable some of the proposed solutions may be.

The arbitrary decree that force should never be used is the root of the whole puzzle, and is the axiom from which nearly all that is erratic or obscure in the Tolstoyan system proceeds.

But how could it happen that a man of Tolstoy's mental power ever made so obvious an error as to suppose, for example, that all use of physical force to check one's fellow-man is immoral?

The question is easily answered if only we remember how strong is the force of reaction. The various dissenting bodies in Russia (Stundists, Baptists, Molokans and others) were continually being persecuted, as their predecessors had been persecuted during centuries. The Orthodox Russian Church had the strong arm of the secular power behind it, and met all attacks by using physical force. So the persecuted Dissenters naturally *identified* physical force with moral iniquity: 'Here is proof that we are in the right and you are in the wrong: we wish only to use the arm of the spirit; you will not let us speak, but oppose us with the arm of flesh!' A false classification was set up in men's minds which *identifies* force with evil. To Tolstoy, who sympathized warmly with the oppressed Dissenters and who was horrified by the wars (alternating with armed peace) from which the world suffers, it was natural enough to adopt this classification.

And although Tolstoy was of course perfectly sincere in holding his non-resistant principles, it is also true that no line he could have adopted would have more embarrassed the Government he was opposing, or have enabled him to strike at it more effectively and more safely. One cannot expect a man to keep his judgment exactly balanced while he is fiercely fighting a great evil, nor should one be hard on him if he predicates universal applicability to a plausible generalization which in his own experience he has found extremely useful. It is we, who live in other circumstances and have other experiences, on whom the duty

falls of detecting and correcting an error which it would be inexcusable for us to make, though for him it was almost inevitable.

The persecuting Church and autocratic Government, leaning on one another for support, could not meet Tolstoy in argument. They would have been stabbed to the heart again and again like unwieldy and naked giants, before they found the one weak spot in the armour of the knight who attacked them. And his indictment of them was so framed that had they used brute force against him they would, to all appearance, by so doing just have proved the truth of his contention. His arrest or banishment would have seemed to confirm the very point on which his teaching really stood most in need of support.

On the property question, again, what could be more natural for a strenuous man—revolting against the exploitation of the poor by the rich—than to identify property with selfishness, and to declare that the remedy lies in abandoning it altogether?

Francis of Assisi flung away his last garment and went out naked into the world. Tolstoy shared that spirit; and in all grades of society and in all nations many men have been attracted by the idea. That it is not adopted to-day by numbers who are in revolt against existing evils, is due to the fact that whenever it is tried evil results follow, and eventually produce a reaction.

In the Middle Ages one hundred and fifty years passed before the natural effects of the Franciscan movement (which adopted the 'no property' principle) were fully visible, and before Wyclif was moved to rebuke the crowd of 'sturdy beggars' preying on men more industrious than themselves, and to declare, with pardonable exaggeration, that

'the man who gives alms to a begging friar, is *ipso facto* excommunicate.' Things move more rapidly in our day of printing-presses and railways; and the same cycle of actions—first the rejection of property, prompted by religious enthusiasm; then the sanctimonious exploitation of others who do use property; than a reaction against the hypocrisy the movement engendered, and, ultimately, a moral resolve to oppose the spread of what was becoming a public nuisance—was witnessed on a small scale in the Tolstoy movement, in England and elsewhere, in the decade 1897-1907.

On the question of Government it is almost too much to expect a Russian to speak with moderation. One is not surprised that so good a man as Kropotkin should in theory be an anarchist, regarding assassination with sombre acquiescence; nor that Tolstoy should be a non-resistant anarchist, denying the need of any Government at all. Here, again, it is remarkable how strong a case he manages to make out; what injustice Governments tolerate; how much they care for themselves and how little they care for the common people; how greatly their patriotism consists in jealousy of other nations; and how astonishingly large a proportion of their revenue is devoted to the destruction of life and property in war.

But, once again, the real answer to his thesis lies in experience. Granting that Government is at best but an expedient, it is still true that we should be worse off without any Government. We are so accustomed to the advantages of having a stable Government that we only half realize how great those advantages are. It is true that when nations come into conflict they pour out their treasure like water, and let it run to waste. But it is a fallacy to suppose that in the



absence of organized governments racial animosity and its evil results would vanish.

Heartsick from the truth, rather than from the exaggeration, in Tolstoy's indictment, I found comfort in the noble words of one who was a practical politician, and did not shrink from power, but whose sincerity, courage and righteousness were as unquestionable as Tolstoy's. Lincoln in his second inaugural address (towards the end of the great American Civil War) said: 'Fondly do we hope, fervently do we pray, that this mighty scourge of war may speedily pass away. Yet if God wills that it continue until all the wealth piled up by the bondman's two hundred and fifty years of unrequited toil shall be sunk, and until every drop of blood drawn by the lash shall be paid by another drawn by the sword, as was said three thousand years ago, so still it must be said, "The judgments of the Lord are true and righteous altogether."' With malice towards none, with charity for all, with firmness in the right as God gives us to see the right, let us strive to finish the work we are in; to bind up the nation's wounds; to care for him who shall have borne the battle, and for his widow and his orphan; to do all which may achieve and cherish a just and lasting peace among ourselves and with all nations.'

The difference between that appeal to continue the work we are in, and Tolstoy's appeal to discard the institutions human effort has evolved, is that whereas Tolstoy concentrates his thought on what man *ought to be*, Lincoln considered also what we *are and what we may become*. Tolstoy denounced and condemned the steps immediately before us, because they are still far from perfection; Lincoln took those steps with his company, the better to help them over the ground. The risk of accepting a far-off ideal is that



we have no possibility of *testing its validity by experience.*

We could not do without our prophets, for they show us many things that without them we should not see; but we must remember that they, too, are fallible. There is, as Jane Addams says: 'A common sense in the mass of men, which cannot be neglected with impunity, just as there is sure to be an eccentricity in the differing and reforming individual, which it is perhaps well to challenge.'

By mentioning Lincoln and the Civil War, I have, however, come to the stronghold of the Tolstoyan position. Are we to justify war? If the wholesale and premeditated slaughter of men is right, can anything be wrong? Have we not an increasing testimony, from Isaiah down to Wyclif, the Quakers, and Tolstoy, against it? Is not militarism (with its accompaniments of despotism and conscription) the great evil of our times, which all good men should unite to resist to the uttermost, and should expose as a crime against humanity?

The war Lincoln directed was as excusable as any recorded in modern history. But looked at in the most material manner, one finds that it cost about £1,600,000,000 to release slaves whose market value was some £400,000,000, and it must not be forgotten that the lives of half a million men were thrown into the bargain, that the reform effected was incomplete, and that a multitude of other ills resulted from the struggle. While, however, I see that the best of wars are terrible evils, I cannot find any point in Lincoln's career at which I feel that he should have refused to continue the work he had in hand. There is a curious sophistry, to the use of which men with a gift for simplification are often unconsciously prone. They

isolate a problem ; and the sophistry lies in the resultant over-simplification. The question, ' Is war right or wrong ? ' evades the fact that the problems of real life are not simple, but complex. The choice is seldom between what is right and what is wrong ; it is usually between a number of possible roads—a choice of evils, or of courses made up of good and evil intertwined. Would it, for instance, have been better for America to acquiesce in the disruption of the Union ? Would it have been better to leave 4,000,000 slaves in captivity, whom Lincoln was afterwards able to release ? Would it have been better for him to refuse the difficult and dangerous duty of steering the ship of State, when he alone commanded the confidence of his fellows sufficiently to save the country from still greater disasters ?

My contention is that one has to weigh *the special circumstances of each case*, and cannot safely guide one's conduct by hard-and-fast rules which know nothing of the *circumstances or character of the people concerned*.

Surely the duty of man is not to do what he can't, but to do the best he can ; and I believe that, by adopting abstract rules never to do this or that, never to use force, or money, or support a Government, or go to war, and by encumbering our consciences with line upon line and precept upon precept, we become less likely to behave reasonably and rightly than if we attended more to those *next steps*, the wisdom of which can be tested in daily life. To speak, as Tolstoy sometimes does, of ceasing to do evil before we begin to do good, is as though you asked a lecturer before delivering his discourse to cease to vitiate the air by breathing ; or as if we insisted that a child should cease to make mistakes before it continued to learn

arithmetic ; so profoundly true is it that ' Social perspective and sanity of judgment come only from contact with social experience, and that such contact is the surest corrective of opinions concerning the social order and concerning efforts for its improvement.'

The justification for using force to one's neighbour lies in the fact that there are circumstances under which (judging the matter with one's faculties at their best) one would oneself wish to be restrained by force. All that Tolstoy says holds good as against malevolent and vindictive force ; but it breaks down as soon as we come to consider cases in which a man's motive for using force (or for using the law, or going to war) is a well-considered belief that it is, on the whole, the best course to pursue in the ultimate interest of the various people concerned.

The justification for the possession and use of property lies in the fact that one can serve one's fellows *better* under settled than under unsettled conditions. Property gives no moral right to a selfish or wasteful expenditure of the fruits of toil ; but property is too responsible a trust to be flung aside. Whether it be kept or lent or given away, it involves responsibilities which reach far beyond the personal relation of its owner towards the first man who begs for it or snatches at it, though that is the only side of the case Tolstoy usually considers.

A firm of forgers of bank-notes or of bills of exchange should, on the Tolstoyan theory, neither be prosecuted, nor arrested, nor have their implements seized. He regards the problem as limited to the forger and the prosecutor, and as being decided by the prosecutor's willingness to forgive the man who asks to be let off. In reality such matters relate to the whole community ; and if men followed Tolstoy's advice and

refused to be policemen, judges, jurymen, witnesses, etc., human affairs would be thrown into inextricable confusion.

So wide is the scope of Tolstoy's non-resistant theory, and so important is its confirmation or refutation, that, at the risk of wearying the reader, I venture to recapitulate the conclusions I have come to.

(1) Tolstoy's pronouncement about property, law and Government cannot be contemptuously brushed aside, for it is no isolated eccentricity of his own. He is the latest and most consistent exponent of a view that reappears again and again in history, and corresponds to deeply-seated instincts and aspirations of the human heart.

(2) Clear, full and convincing replies to the opinions he advocates have been sadly lacking. It has usually been left to the hard, wasteful, blighting force of experience to check the evil results of what was wrong in those opinions. A convincing reply might have saved many an earnest soul, that without such guidance spent its strength on a path leading no-whither.

(3) All bandying of imputations of base motives in the discussion of a matter of this kind is out of place. The Holy Synod said Tolstoy thought as he did because he was morally perverted ; other Churches often say the same of those who do not agree with them ; Tolstoy (like the Synod and the Churches) assumed that what he said was precisely what Jesus meant, and that all men knew it to be true and would admit it were they but sincere. In fact, neither Synod nor Tolstoy can be allowed thus to beg the question in their own favour. The arguments *pro* and *con* must be squarely met whether those who advance them be honest or dishonest.

(4) For Russia in particular, where the existing form<sup>1</sup> of autocracy seems to be on its last legs, it is nothing less than a national calamity that her great literary prophet should exhort people to neglect and despise the aid that law, government and definite property relations afford to public well-being. That Russia may pass through the crisis that is sooner or later coming upon her, without having to encounter a reign of terror and a subsequent military dictatorship, it is all important that reverence for law, and the habit of respecting social as well as individual morality, should be carefully cultivated. Respect for social morality is far too weak everywhere, and is weaker in Russia than elsewhere. That participation in local or other Governmental affairs, in the administration of justice, or in the management of private property, should be subjected to moral indictment is greatly to be regretted, however sincere the motives prompting the indictment may be. As Jane Addams says: 'An exaggerated *personal* morality is often mistaken for a *social* morality, and until it attempts to minister to a social situation its total inadequacy is not discovered.' To attempt to attain a social morality without being willing to learn the lessons of democratic experience (which furnish the only possible corrective and guide), ends in an exaggerated individual morality but not in a social morality at all. . . . 'A man who takes the betterment of humanity for his aim and end, must also take the daily experiences of humanity for the constant correction of his process!'

It would be difficult to understand how it was that

<sup>1</sup> I reproduce the following paragraph exactly as I wrote it (in *A Peculiar People*) in 1904. Subsequent events have somewhat strikingly confirmed it.



to the end of his days, in spite of all experience and all arguments, Tolstoy could never be prevailed upon to reconsider his statement of the Non-Resistant principle, had he not himself supplied a key to the puzzle, in the following words :

‘ I know that most men—not only those considered clever, but even those who are very clever and capable of understanding most difficult scientific, mathematical, or philosophic problems—can very seldom discern even the simplest and most obvious truth if it be such as to oblige them to admit the falsity of conclusions they have formed perhaps with much difficulty : conclusions of which they are proud, which they have taught to others, and on which they have built their lives ! ’ [*What is Art ?*]

‘ God needs our limitations,’ Tolstoy was fond of saying ; and even the greatest of men have their limitations. Tolstoy was gifted with an unrivalled faculty for stating a case impressively ; it enabled him to render service to mankind the value of which is not yet fully recognized, and I should greatly regret if by any words of mine I appeared to underrate his worth ; but he has sometimes treated as simple what is really very complex, and has included in one wholesale condemnation, customs, institutions and occupations, the abolition of which would leave us worse off than we now are. The appreciation of the fact that property carries with it duties rather than rights, and that its possession furnishes no excuse for luxury, or for not serving our fellows, preserves what is vital in Tolstoy’s social and economic tractates, and paves the way for those voluntary or legislative readjustments in society which are becoming every day more and more urgently necessary.

Tolstoy was no faultless and infallible prophet,

whose works should be swallowed as bibliolaters swallow the Bible ; but he was a man of extraordinary capacity, sincerity and self-sacrifice, who for more than thirty years strove to make absolutely plain to all, the solutions of the most vital problems of existence. To admit that he did not always succeed in reaching the final solution of the problems he dealt with, is merely to admit that he was human.

When his achievements are finally summed up, in the foreground will stand the fact that he, first among Russians, framed a moral indictment of Church and State, of Synod and Autocracy which, compelling men's attention, re-echoed throughout the world and so undermined the moral bases of the Tsardom that it fell with a crash within a single generation.

With great originality, power and lucidity he succeeded in giving, in popular form, sound answers to a number of great questions concerning art and religion. But not least among his many claims to the gratitude of humanity will stand the service he rendered by boldly grappling with problems others feared to tackle and even he failed to overcome: problems so complex that only one side of them can be dealt with at a time. He called in question the very foundations on which our social edifice is built, and he did this so clearly and forcibly that the matter cannot be left where it is. We cannot go on patching the superstructure if the whole building is on the point of crashing to the ground ! I have tried to suggest reasons for believing that, however urgently the building may need repair, the foundations are as firm to-day as when they were first laid, and will be found to rest, not on the subsoil of selfishness, but on the firm ground of sound principle.

When the clamour of partisans and of detractors

has died down—when Tolstoy's errors and exaggerations have all been frankly admitted—it will only be the more distinctly realized how immense is the debt humanity owes to this man, whose intellectual force, love of the people, courage and outspokenness gave his words a power of arousing men's consciences, unapproached by any of his compatriots and unequalled by any of his contemporaries.

That, in the event, his writings appear as the chief literary origins of the Revolution should not be reckoned against him. Had the governing classes listened in time to his appeals for justice for the poor and oppressed, or had the rulers of Europe been as ready to form a League to preserve peace as they were to arrange alliances to preserve their power, the result of his efforts would have been different. He warned men of the wrath to come, and must not be held responsible for the fact that the oppressed masses hearkened to his voice (to the extent, at least, of realizing their wrongs) while the rulers remained deaf or indifferent to his appeals.

CHAPTER XIV  
THE SEX QUESTION

EARLY in 1889 there were signs that Tolstoy's literary fast was over and that he was about to return to the forms of Art he had so long abjured. Writing to Gay, he said: 'I have been staying for three weeks with Urusov. . . . There, in solitude, I got a little writing done. Here I have again dried up. I have among other things begun an article on Art, but cannot finish it. But it is not that, which I must write. And I *must* write. There is something I see that no one else sees. So at least it appears to me. And one must before one dies manage to make others see it.'

The work in question was *The Kreutzer Sonata*, a story destined to bring upon his head much ridicule and abuse, but a work proving that his hand had not lost its cunning, and causing those who recognized a masterly work when they saw it to say: 'his train has at last come out of its tunnel.'

The views expressed in *The Kreutzer Sonata* did not meet with much approval, but the interest it aroused was extreme.

It is a story told in a railway carriage. Pozdnishev, who had killed his wife, but whom a jury had found irresponsible for his actions, tells how he came to do it; and maintains that the words of Christ, 'Every one

that looketh on a woman to lust after her hath committed adultery with her already in his heart,' apply to all women—especially to one's own wife—and that absolute purity in thought and act is the only right thing.

Tolstoy's craftsmanship is unailing. By selecting Pozdnishev—who had gone through so much and was on the verge of insanity—to express his feeling, he is able to utter an extreme view with absolute fidelity to life. There is something almost uncanny in the way the thinker in Tolstoy, with a bias for exaggeration, exploits his *alter ego*, the artist with a perfect sense of proportion and balance.

Pozdnishev says: 'Woman has so acquired the art of evoking sensuality, that a man cannot address her quietly. Even in former days I always felt uncomfortable and frightened when I saw a woman arrayed in a ball-dress; but now it simply terrifies me, and I want to call a policeman and demand protection against the danger, and have it removed!' He is 'surprised that we tolerate those adornments of her person, plainly evoking sensuality, which are permitted to woman in our society. It is like setting all sorts of traps in the roads and public paths: it is even worse! Why are games of chance forbidden, while women in attire evoking sensuality are not forbidden? They are a thousand times more dangerous!'

Man, he continues, is to blame for regarding woman as an object with which to gratify his lust. To serve that purpose she is educated, and taught to despise old maids and to look down on those who have chosen the path of purity. To that end her accomplishments are directed, and for that she is dressed up and exhibited: 'It is the same in the street of brothels and at the Court balls! . . .'



Pozdnishev is also horrified by the increasing use of preventatives: 'She (his wife) was unwell, and the doctors forbade her to have children, and taught her how to prevent them. To me that was detestable. I struggled against it, but she, with frivolous obstinacy, insisted on having her way, and I submitted. The last justification of our swinish life—children—was removed, and life became still nastier!'

Tolstoy explains that in the natural course of things the sex-appetite exhausts itself; on the mother's side owing to the strain of child-bearing and nursing and family cares, and on the father's side owing to the burden of supporting the family. Where preventatives are used, the normal burdens of matrimony are evaded, the appetites are kept alive, and sooner or later either the husband or wife is attracted by some one else and evil results follow.

He does not make us feel that he has fairly weighed the evils that result from causing a woman to bear unwanted children, or from overtaxing her strength. In actual life the choice generally is not between using preventatives or practising continence, but between preventatives and an excessive birth-rate. Even where, as in a monastery, men set themselves to practise continence, it often happens that their minds are more obsessed by sex-desire than they would be were they married, and their usefulness in the world suffers accordingly.

The story, taken as an exceptionally telling instance of the evil of allowing oneself to be dominated by lustful desires, is true to life, and despite its outspokenness is unobjectionable. But it naturally raised discussion as to what Tolstoy meant.

Some passages in the story (referring to the evils of jealousy) caused people to ask whether he did not

regard free-love as the solution of the matter. Shocked by such an interpretation, he wrote a remarkable *Afterword (Essays and Letters)* to explain his meaning, and it is with this *Afterword* that one may fairly join issues.

In it Tolstoy does not confine his thesis to exceptional cases, but applies it to all married life and, instead of basing his argument on any broad principle evidently making for the welfare of humanity, he rests it on certain isolated sayings of Jesus: a method never satisfactory unless one can see clearly what general principle such sayings fit into, and what benefit to the human race would accrue from its general adoption.

Tolstoy says: 'In our society young people devote the best part of their lives—the men to spying out, pursuing, and obtaining (whether in marriage or free union) those best suited to attract them; and the women and girls to enticing and entrapping men into free unions or marriages. In this way the best powers of many people run to waste in an activity not merely unproductive but injurious. . . . No aim that we count worthy of a man . . . can be attained by means of connection with the object of one's love (either with or without a marriage rite). On the contrary, falling in love and connection . . . never facilitates, but always impedes, the attainment of any worthy aim. . . .

'The Christian ideal is that of love of God and one's fellow-man . . . whereas sexual love, marriage, is a service of self, and consequently in any case an obstacle to the service of God and man, and therefore, from a Christian point of view, a fall, a sin.

'To get married would not help the service of God and man, though it were done to perpetuate the human race. Instead of getting married and pro-

ducing fresh children, it would be much simpler to save and rear those millions of children who are now perishing around us for lack of food for their bodies, not to mention food for their souls. . . .

'Only if he were sure that all existing children were provided for, could a Christian enter upon marriage without being conscious of a moral fall.

'In the Gospels it is said clearly, and so that there is no possibility of misinterpretation: First, that a married man should not divorce his wife to take another, but should live with her whom he has once taken. Secondly, that it is wrong (and it is said of men generally, married or unmarried) to look on a woman as an object of desire. And, thirdly, that for the unmarried it is better not to marry—that is to say, it is better to be quite chaste. . . .'

In marriage, harmony of physical and mental condition is desirable, but Tolstoy sets these in opposition, as in Pozdnishev's reply to the lady who exclaimed indignantly:

'But you are speaking of physical love! Don't you admit the existence of love founded on identity of ideals and on spiritual affinity?'

'Spiritual affinity! Identity of ideals!' repeated he. 'But in that case (excuse my rudeness) why do they go to bed together?'

A few years previously in *What I Believe* Tolstoy had written: 'I now understand that monogamy is the natural law of humanity, which must not be infringed. . . . I cannot approve of a celibate life for those who are ripe for marriage. . . . I cannot make a distinction between unions called marriages and unions not so named, nor can I fail to consider a union a man has once entered into as being holy and obligatory.'

It seems strange that what in 1883 was 'holy and obligatory' should in 1890 have become 'a fall, a sin'! Even as late as 1886 Tolstoy had ended *What Then Must We Do?* with an ardent appeal to women to do their duty as prolific mothers, and now, to the perplexity of some who had prided themselves on the size of their families, the ideal was different. One should not reproach a writer for being frank enough to admit that he has changed his views, but doubts inevitably arise as to whether a writer's views which were erroneous yesterday, are infallible to-day.

Tolstoy himself writes: 'I never anticipated that the development of my thoughts would bring me to such conclusions. I was startled at them and did not wish to believe them, but it was impossible not to do so.'

Perhaps the advice Tolstoy once gave to his friend Professor Yanzhul throws light on the fact that he did not hesitate to publish the amazing conclusions he arrived at. He said: 'If your starting-point and deductions are sound, never be afraid of practical objections to your logical conclusions. Otherwise you will never say or produce anything *original*!'

One should however remember Tolstoy's position at this time, and his inclination to generalize from his own experience. He was still a vigorous man, and the sexual attraction he felt for his wife made their disagreements all the more painful, and alternated with periods of great irritation. He felt the sex-bond to be a hindrance to his freedom to preach and to live as he thought right, and generalizing from this feeling he denounced sexual relations altogether.

He had, ere this, definitely repudiated Church and State, so that no religious ceremony or official registration of marriage could find place in his doctrine.



The free-love solution (very generally accepted by the Russian intelligentsia) was contrary to his feeling and to the religious tradition and Gospel precept to which he adhered.

He wanted to form a clear, simple rule of conduct, intelligible to every one; and the only rule to fit his case and accord with his principles was the recommendation of absolute chastity. The evils arising from sex were to be cured by eliminating sexual desire.

It should also be borne in mind that Tolstoy did not avoid formulating *unattainable* ideals, but, on the contrary, commended them. His feeling was that if men saw an ideal ahead of them and strove towards it, even though it was entirely beyond their reach, the *direction in which they would move* would be a right one. It is however difficult to believe that it is desirable for the conception of the children yet to be born into our world always to be accompanied by a sense of sin and shame. The elimination of the love of men for women, and of the desire to have offspring of one's own, hardly seems to bring nearer Tolstoy's early ideal of the 'green stick'; which was to enable 'all men to cease suffering any misfortune and to make them continually happy.'

The objection that, if his advice were followed, the human race would end in a single generation did not move Tolstoy. To such objections he, in effect, replied: 'It is true that people do not and will not act so, but they ought to strive towards it and not consent to lower the ideal!'

This reply evidently begs the question whether the thing he has selected is a *true ideal*: whether the propagation of the race by fit parents is not often one of the best services they can perform; and whether



it is not true that (as Mrs. Browning<sup>s</sup> said) : ' Truth is no cleaner thing than love.'

It may be necessary to overhaul the accepted ideals on this subject and to consider it afresh. But if we start from the principle that *those things are good in sexual relations which make for the health, happiness and efficiency of the present and future generations*—we shall, like Tolstoy, conclude that it is bad to allow lustfulness to dominate our lives, but shall not overlook the fundamental difference between whole-hearted love of which desire is only a part, and lust which is regardless of all but its own satisfaction. As an antidote and corrective to *The Kreutzer Sonata* Dr. M. C. Stopes' book, *Married Love*, may be recommended.

The remark frequently made that Tolstoy is inconsistent and insincere because he continued to enact the part of a husband after writing *The Kreutzer Sonata* is, however, quite unjust. For assuming his extremest view to be correct, his position would be parallel to that of an intemperate man who had won his way to a state of semi-self-control alternating with periods of inebriety. Would not such a man be quite justified in testifying to his belief that the use of intoxicants is harmful?

Tolstoy is interesting and valuable just because he tells us honestly what he thinks and feels, regardless of how it reflects on his own conduct. That is a rare and admirable practice, which should be recognized and respected. It would be much fairer to say that those who trim their opinions to match their conduct are insincere : for few men can be so obtuse as never to let their minds travel nearer to perfection than their bodies have attained.

The publication of *The Kreutzer Sonata* produced

a tremendous storm. The Church naturally resented Tolstoy's scornful dismissal of the idea of marriage as a sacrament ; while the ' advanced ' people, who for a whole generation had been asserting the liberty of individual choice without lifelong engagements, were equally furious. From both camps the thunders pealed forth. An Archbishop denounced Tolstoy as a ' wolf in sheep's clothing,' and advised his destruction, as his teaching was undermining the whole edifice of society.

The general verdict of Russian society was, ' Tolstoy is getting old. He has lost his vigour, and the grapes are sour ! ' But this suggestion, that his doctrine was the outcome of physical debility, was entirely wide of the mark. Six years later, when he was nearly seventy, I was speaking to him on these matters. After saying that one should never be discouraged or cease to strive to attain to what is good, he added, ' I was myself a husband last night, but that is no reason for abandoning the struggle ; God may grant me not to be so again ! ' He was physically strong and active for years after that, and some of his great intellectual achievements still lay before him.

All the same, Tolstoy felt the sting of such comments, as one sees by what he wrote of his life as a young man.

' It is grievous to me, in my egotism, to have lived my life bestially, and to know that now it cannot be retrieved. Grievous, chiefly, because people will say : " It is all very well for you, a dying old man, to say this ; but you did not live so ! We too, when we are old, will say the same." That is where the chief punishment of sin lies : in feeling that one is an unworthy vessel for the transmission of the will of God—befouled and spoiled.'

In real life he was usually lenient in his judgment of others, unless the matter came near one of his own family. I remember, soon after Gorky's visit to New York, hearing Tolstoy express indignation as well as amazement at the way the American people had treated that writer and Madame Andreyev; and when Tolstoy was over seventy I remember walking with him and with a friend of his—a well-known literary man who was still older. The latter was saying that Tolstoy's assertions did not accord with the speaker's own experience of life. He had a mistress, and did not consider that it spoilt his life.

'So much the better!' rejoined Tolstoy quietly. 'But what I say is, that a man in such cases has to seduce a maid, or to deceive a husband, or to go with a woman who sells herself.'

Undoubtedly the discussion of the book in society sometimes led to results quite contrary to those aimed at by Tolstoy. There were cases also in which wives with no natural inclination for matrimony were filled by this book with a real loathing for the sex relation; and since, among decent people, such a sentiment renders marital relations impossible, their husbands found themselves exposed to the difficulties and dangers of married celibacy.

*The Kreutzer Sonata* presents a point of view that cannot be left out of account, and sets before us the honest and strongly felt opinions of a great writer; but just as Tolstoy tried to eliminate the evils of the property system by discarding property, so he tried to eliminate the evils of sex by discountenancing physical love. Unfortunately the attempt to reject property and sex entails the loss of what is good more certainly than it offers an escape from what is evil; and there is justice in the reproach some one has made,

that Tolstoy is in conflict not merely with the defects of human nature, but with the fundamentals of that nature—the very things that make man *man*.

The Mosaic sex-law aimed at securing the maximum number of children. Its provisions do not suit the needs of to-day, but any new morality should be based on some equally clear, practical, and verifiable conception of human needs, and not on arbitrary, conventional, or ecclesiastical maxims inherited from remote ages.

W. T. Stead visited Yasnaya when Tolstoy was beginning the book, and the two discussed that subject as well as many other questions. On the last evening of Stead's stay there was a romp in the large upstairs room which served the Tolstoys both as dining-room and chief living-room, and after a while Stead, who happened to be chasing the eldest daughter, Tatiana, managed to catch her and, feeling tired, thought to finish the romp by going on his knee and kissing her hand; which he believed to be an accepted Russian practice. It was soon evident that something was amiss. The family departed bedward without bidding him 'good-night' and, after Stead himself was in bed, Tolstoy, having followed him to his room, entered with a Bible in his hand, looking very grave, and showed him the passage, 'If thy brother sin against thee, go shew him his fault between thee and him alone: if he hear thee, thou hast gained thy brother.' He intimated that Stead had committed a serious offence. The latter assured Tolstoy that he had meant no harm, had not dreamed of making love to the girl, and had merely intended the salute playfully. After a while Tolstoy accepted this explanation, gave Stead a brotherly kiss, and went away.

Stead; who was leaving by the morning train, went

down to breakfast as usual, but found only the governess to receive him, and had to depart without saying good-bye to any of the family.

On his return to Moscow he told me of the unpleasant episode. The explanation was that though it is in Russia quite in order, on due occasion, to kiss a married lady's hand, it is another matter and not at all correct to kiss the hand of an unmarried lady.

Tolstoy was ever ready to take offence and to be alarmed about such matters. In Part Six of *Anna Karenina* he has described the absurd jealousy of Levin (his *alter ego*) at Vasenka Veslovsky's admiration of Kitty, and *The Kreutzer Sonata* indicates that he subsequently suffered from jealousy much more seriously.

Having mentioned Stead, I will add that sixteen years later, when he was issuing a Tolstoy Annual in connection with the *Review of Reviews*, he again visited Russia, and, at his request, I asked Tolstoy whether Stead might go to see him. On 20th August 1905 Tolstoy replied: 'As to Stead, I shall be particularly pleased by his visit. It will efface the misunderstanding for which I was probably to blame.'

The visit, however, did not come off; for Stead wrote asking whether Tolstoy would not write something for the Annual, and Tolstoy, regarding this as a case of commercial exploitation, not only declined to write anything, but withdrew his invitation. To Stead's credit be it recorded that he did not allow these incidents to obscure his cordial recognition of Tolstoy's worth; and when he had to differ from any of Tolstoy's views, he did so with consideration and restraint.



## CHAPTER XV

### THE FAMINE AND PATRIOTISM

**I**N 1891 Tolstoy wrote to the papers announcing that he gave free permission to any one to publish, in Russia or abroad, any works he had written since 1881, and any he might thereafter publish.

This announcement settled for the time a question which had been long in dispute between his wife and himself. She continued to avail herself of the copyright in the works antecedent to and including *Anna Karenina*. Publishers might scramble for anything written subsequently, the Countess only having the same right as any one else. A point Tolstoy somewhat overlooked was that the advantage would lie with whoever could secure his MS. and publish it *first*, and that repudiation of copyright did not free him from having to decide who should have that advantage.

I do not think that the above-named arrangement was a good one to ensure the best form of publication or to safeguard the interests of the public. Anything that tends to convert trade into a gambling transaction is undesirable, and the right to scramble for the new works of a popular writer offers a temptation to rush books out in rival editions without due care in their production, and incidentally involves much waste of

labour, and much perplexity to those who buy or sell books. The harm was minimized in Russia by the Countess's action in promptly publishing reliable editions, at moderate prices, of such works as the Censor licensed. Other publishers realized that the offer was not much use to them, and therefore did not scramble or gamble over it as wildly as might have been expected.

The *indefiniteness* that arises from the abandonment of copyright is a reason for not commending Tolstoy's example for general imitation; but from his own standpoint, as one who wished to be free from the taint of property-owning, it evidently had its advantages. It accorded with his general attitude and principles, and seemed likely (though in fact it failed) to free him from business worries. He had decided to ignore the Censor and write freely; and had he concerned himself with the question of publication he would have been involved in endless, and often futile, attempts to publish in Russia such scraps as might possibly be allowed, as well as in all sorts of complications about the publication of the Russian text abroad, and of the translation of his works into various languages, while his correspondence was all the time exposed to police supervision. For such work he had no inclination; and he was exceedingly grateful when, later on, V. G. Tchertkof relieved him of the whole business.

Moreover, the repudiation by the world's foremost writer of all personal profit from the works he produced during thirty years, stands as a striking proof of his integrity. He might have drawn a huge income, and by distributing it have 'made a pipe of himself'—but we should not have been as sure as we are now, that he was quite unbiased by mercenary motives.

At this time the vexed question of the disposal of his estates was also settled. They were divided among his wife and children in portions as nearly equal as possible. The share received by his wife did not amount to more than what she had brought as a dowry at the time of her marriage. Like the other shares, it was little over Rs. 50,000 (about £5000).

Tolstoy's views were not fixed once for all when he published them, and in the following letter, written to a friend in March 1891, we have an instance of how they went on evolving.

'The thoughts and feelings that agitate you, those new horizons which you see before you, are just what agitate me, and in which I live . . . and in which Hilkov lives, with whom I have been corresponding zealously. . . . Do not imagine that I defend the point of view I formerly expressed in *What I Believe*. I not only do not defend it, but am glad we have outlived it.'

Meanwhile the Tolstoy Colonies continued to get into trouble, and in April he wrote to Feinermann :

'I was very much struck by what you say at the end of your letter about the constant tergiversations that go on among our friends. . . . I wrote to Popov that it seems to me that in our life (by "our" I mean those who are travelling the same road with ourselves) a painful, or rather a seemingly painful, time has arrived, demanding effort and firmness and lacking the former joyousness and enthusiasm . . . a time of disillusionment in efforts to realize our plans rapidly and fully ; a time of apostasy and indifference, a time not even of persecution (which on the contrary animates) but of contempt.'

As that letter indicates, the first enthusiasm of the

Tolstoy movement was dying down. It had become plain that Tolstoy's own place, at least for the present, was at home ; and it had also become evident that the Colonies, started as a result of the interest he had aroused, were going neither to be materially successful nor to ease the spiritual struggles of those who joined them. Under these circumstances Tolstoy became yet more absorbed in his writings, and less inclined to insist on external changes.

In 1891 a considerable part of Russia suffered from famine. A. M. Novikov (who was for three years tutor at the Tolstoys' but who that summer had been helping Raevsky, an old friend of Tolstoy's, to take a census of the crops in a famine district) has told how Tolstoy was drawn into the work of famine relief. He says : ' In August I returned to Yasnaya. . . . Tolstoy inquired about the famine district, and began to say that there are always many hungry, but that the only way to help a horse to drag its load is *to get off its back*.

' To me those words sounded dull and lifeless. I knew that Raevsky was rushing about from one District Council to another while Tolstoy was sitting at Yasnaya and writing that there always is a famine somewhere, and that it is immoral to prepare to feed the famine-stricken and to imagine *that* to be a good and necessary activity, while our whole way of life causes more and more people to become destitute. Yet how fine, convincing, and true it all sounded, when Tolstoy himself expounded it to us !

' But before a month had passed, all had changed. Raevsky found time, while rushing from one Council to another, to call at Yasnaya. He had determined to try to arouse Tolstoy and induce him to join the ranks of those who were feeding the hungry. He

began by describing scenes in the famine district, and he persuaded Tolstoy to go and see for himself. Such outings always attracted Tolstoy.

‘He went to the famine district for a couple of days, in order to write about it with better knowledge,—and he remained there almost continuously for two years!’

The position was a remarkable one. The Russian Government stoutly denied the famine, and looked askance at all private initiative. Moreover, Tolstoy himself disapproved of what he was doing. I remember, after the famine was over, his explaining to me that a man’s real, useful activity consists only in what he does with his own brain and hand, and telling me that his famine-relief work did not afford him satisfaction. He used his favourite simile about ‘making a pipe of oneself,’ but it seemed to me that he hardly realized how very useful a good water-pipe often is.

Making an exception to his rule of taking no money for his literary work, he sold the articles he wrote on the famine, and with that money, as well as with what other people gave him—helped by his daughters Tatiana and Mary and a niece, and coached by Raevsky in practical details—he set to work opening eating-houses and organizing relief for those upon whom the terrible calamity of an almost complete failure of the rye-harvest had fallen.

The work was supported by a great stream of contributions which flowed in as a result of letters that, in November 1891, the Countess published in the papers, announcing that her husband and family had settled in the famine district to render help to the starving.

Raevsky over-worked and over-exposed himself, caught influenza, and died a sacrifice to his devotion ;



but Tolstoy continued through that winter and the next to organize relief in four districts, till the good harvest of 1893 came and the work drew to its natural close.

A history of the famine of 1891 and 1892, or even of the part played in it by the Tolstoy family, would fill a volume. The three eldest sons worked in other districts, while the daughters, Tatiana and Mary, worked with their father. The Countess, his wife, remained with the four little children in Moscow and acted as a centre to which contributions flowed. They came from all parts of the world : including ship-loads of grain from America and generous donations from the Society of Friends (the Quakers) in England.

The following letter from Tolstoy to one who was setting out to render aid, tells of the way in which the work was done :

‘ If you wish to open a Soup Kitchen in the Lukoyansky District, where things seem to be very bad, do as follows :

‘ When you have chosen a place amid the hungriest villages, collect there a store of flour, bran, potatoes, cabbages, beetroot, peas, lentils, oatmeal and salt, or what you can get of these things, and then go to one of the villages and choose near the middle of it (if it has not more than thirty or forty houses) one of the very poorest families (or two, if the village is twice as big) and offer to supply the householder with his food if he will bake bread and cook for the destitute, the old folk, the weak and the children, or the not old but hungry—up to the number of thirty or forty persons. Then make a list, with the Elder’s aid, of those who ought to be fed. Give out the provisions, and visit the Soup Kitchen, tasting the food, counteracting abuses, and admitting those who are on the list and

who apply. The thing is as simple and as easily arranged as though it were a process of nature.'

To give the people two meals a day cost only from thirty to thirty-six pence per person per month.

Tolstoy would not have been himself had he been satisfied with what he was doing. Self-indictment, as well as the indictment of society, came natural to him.

In December he wrote to Feinermann: 'Thank you for letting me have news of how you are living. I am living abominably. I don't myself know how I was trapped into this work of feeding the starving. . . . It is unsuitable for me to feed those by whom I am myself fed; but I have been dragged into it, and I find myself distributing the vomit thrown up by the rich. I feel that this is abominable and disgusting, but I cannot stand aside; not that I do not think I ought to, for I do think so, but that I have not the strength to do it.'

In February 1892 he wrote to another friend: 'If I had had any doubt left as to whether money can do any good, using it to buy grain, and feeding some thousands of people, has quite convinced me that one can do nothing but harm with it.

'You will say: "Why then do you go on?"'

'Because I cannot escape, and because—beyond a feeling of great depression—I experience nothing, and therefore think I am not doing this work for my personal satisfaction.'

Tolstoy's powers of endurance were indeed taxed to the utmost both by the work and by the misery that surrounded it; and he was sometimes so exhausted that he could with difficulty express the simplest thought or even name an article he required. 'Tanya,' he would say to his daughter, 'to-morrow we must be sure to send . . .' but his usually retentive memory

refused to act, and he was unable to say what was to be sent, or where.

The priests frightened the peasants with tales of learned theologians having conclusively proved out of the Book of Revelation that Tolstoy was Antichrist. The story of his branding peasants on the forehead to seal them to the power of the devil was preached from the pulpit, and it was said that the Count paid the peasants eight roubles apiece as purchase-money. A Bishop delivered a special sermon at the nearest railway station before a crowded audience, dishing up all these fables and denouncing Tolstoy in the strongest terms as Antichrist, who was seducing them with food, fuel and other worldly goods. But the Orthodox Church, he said, was strong enough to 'exterminate Antichrist and his works.'

At first a good many peasants were really frightened by these sermons; but most of them remained indifferent, reasoning that Antichrist would come to destroy and torment men—but that this man saved, pitied and aided them.

There were in all 246 eating-houses under Tolstoy's supervision, in which from 10,000 to 13,000 people were fed; and besides this there were 124 eating-houses for children, in which 2000 to 3000 were fed. (These figures exclude the relief organized by his sons in other Provinces.)

The articles Tolstoy wrote on the famine were censored in Russia and published in mutilated form; but they appeared in the *Daily Telegraph* in extenso, and were even (it is said) over-coloured by the translator. They were then re-translated into Russian (again over-coloured in the process) and published in the reactionary *Moscow Gazette* with strenuous demands for Tolstoy's suppression.

In the then state of Russia it was an anomaly that such a man as Tolstoy should be left at liberty, and in fact he barely escaped the fate that befell so many of Russia's reformers.

It was his aunt who saved him. The Emperor, Alexander III, knowing that she had asked to see him, called on her one day, and this is her account of their conversation.

“ “ In a day or two a report will be made to you in favour of incarcerating Russia's greatest genius in a Monastery,” said I.

‘ The Emperor's face instantly changed, and he became stern and profoundly sad.

“ “ Tolstoy ? ” asked he briefly.

“ “ You have guessed rightly, Monarch ! ” replied I.

“ “ Then he has designs on my life ? ” asked the Emperor.

‘ I was amazed, but secretly encouraged ; I thought that *only that* would induce the Emperor to confirm the Minister's decision.

‘ I recounted to the Emperor all that I had learned from the Minister about Leo's offence, and I saw, to my great delight, that his face gradually assumed its usual mild and extremely affable expression. . . .

‘ Two days later I learnt that having listened to the Minister's report of what had occurred the Emperor, putting aside the Report, replied literally as follows :

“ “ I request you not to touch Tolstoy. I have no intention of making a martyr of him, and bringing universal indignation upon myself. If he is guilty, so much the worse for him ! ” ’

Tolstoy, born a son of the Orthodox Church, and having by his writings turned men from that Faith, was technically guilty of a criminal offence. The administrative powers entrusted to the Governor-General of



Moscow were more than sufficient to allow of his being disposed of without the formality of a trial, and it seems probable that the greatest of Russian writers lived in freedom for the last twenty years of his life, instead of dying in a damp and stinking dungeon, thanks to the fact that he had an aunt at Court.

A glimpse of Tolstoy at the beginning of the winter of 1892-93 is given by Semyonov, who mentions that Tolstoy had altered considerably during the preceding couple of years. His beard had become quite grey and his hair was thinner. He seemed smaller, but his deep-set eyes still seemed to pierce one's soul. He was then feeling hopeful of the spread of a good spirit among people, and mentioned with great approval a priest, Apollov, who, having become convinced that the dogmas of the Church have no sound basis, had resigned his living though he lacked any other means of subsistence. Tolstoy also spoke very warmly of the school teacher Drozhzhin, who for conscience' sake had refused army service. It was the first instance of the kind to come under his personal notice. Subsequently he frequently came in touch with men who suffered imprisonment and even death for their resistance to conscription. Drozhzhin himself died later on of the treatment he received.

How numerous such refusals became is not generally known, for the military authorities keep them secret. The position of a Christian Government met by a refusal to learn to kill, based on obedience to Christ's commands, is a difficult one, and the contrast Tolstoy draws between Christianity and patriotism is more vividly illustrated by such incidents than by anything else.

Among his literary works in 1892 was an essay,



*The First Step (Essays and Letters)*, in which he forcibly pleads the cause of vegetarianism on moral and humanitarian grounds. Another article written about the same time was *A Conversation among Leisured People*. The characters in it discuss the desirability of living rightly, but owing to the obligations of the young to the old and of the old to the young, and of each one to somebody else, they all object to any one changing his or her conventional way of life, bad as they admit that way to be. Tolstoy makes us feel that he is here holding up to ridicule the arguments used by his family and friends to check his own desire for radical change.

In 1893 he wrote a very interesting essay entitled *Non-Acting (Essays and Letters)*, of which he wrote to Gay: 'I have not finished my article on Art, but have written one on Zola's and Dumas' letters on the mental conditions of to-day. Zola's stupidity, and the prophetic, artistic, poetic voice of Dumas, interested me very much.'

A very important work, begun during the famine but only completed in 1893, is *The Kingdom of God is Within You*, which deals with Non-Resistance as applied to Governments, and contains a scathing indictment of war.

Tolstoy's contention is that Governments which make war, have prisons, maintain penal laws, and 'rob people' (by obliging them to pay rates and taxes) are fundamentally immoral, and exist for the advantage of the rich and powerful to the detriment of the poor and needy. He asserts that it is our duty to refuse to co-operate with Governments, whether as voters, officials, Ministers, policemen or soldiers.

To most men of the Western world, such a thesis, stated in bare outline, appears quite unreasonable. But as Tolstoy presented it, it assumed plausibility,

and even now, at every English election, a number of votes are left unused owing to Tolstoy's influence. His arguments have certainly weighed with many of our Conscientious Objectors during the present war, and it would be a great mistake to suppose that these arguments can be either suppressed or ignored. One has first to understand them, do them full justice, and then detect any error they may contain.

I cannot convey his point of view as to the wrongfulness of Government, nor show its plausibility, better perhaps than by recounting an occurrence to which he often alluded as having happened within his own knowledge.

A village Community wished to migrate to Siberia. Unable to secure official sanction and impatient of bureaucratic delays, they eventually sold up their belongings and set off without permission. In Siberia, they failed to find suitable land to settle on, and wandered farther and farther till they reached a no-man's-land beyond the Russian frontier yet ignored by Chinese officials. Here they settled, free from taxes, free from conscription, and with no tithes to pay. The soil was fertile and after fifteen years of hard work the penniless immigrants had become prosperous.

One day a Russian Government official lost his way and stumbled upon this Community. The necessary rectification of frontier soon followed; the district became Russian, and all the blessings of civilization poured in upon it. They paid taxes, and arrears of taxes; their young men went as conscripts for that year and for the preceding years; and a priest levied contributions for his own and his family's maintenance, with the result that in a few years the Community was again completely impoverished.

The story illustrates Tolstoy's view of Government

as an unmixed evil ; but it conceals a sophistry. A village Community of that kind carries with it its own Government : namely, its Elder and his assistants, who do not scruple to use physical force if necessary to maintain order ; and the existence of a strong central Government at any rate prevents civil war between different districts.

In writing for Western readers it is however hardly necessary to dwell on the weak side of Tolstoy's anarchist doctrine. It is more to the point to show that it deserves some consideration. Let us therefore note that, though we are often told that Governments exist primarily to protect life and property, yet all the burglars in Europe do not steal as much property in a generation as a civilized Government seizes and destroys in a single month of warfare, nor do all the murderers in the world kill as many people in a century as the Government of an enlightened and Christian country sometimes kills in a single day's hostilities.

We may disagree with Tolstoy's conclusion that Governments do nothing but harm ; but to retain the support of their subjects Governments will have to learn to do better in future than they have done in the past. It is true that Tolstoy's appeal to men not to submit to conscription has produced effects which endanger the cause of freedom (and not in Russia only), but it should be remembered that had his appeal to the conscience of mankind received the attention it deserves from any of the Governments, serious efforts might have been made before the present war began to bring about such international relations as would ensure Civilization against such calamities as have now befallen it. And if some of our statesmen are now seriously concerned to found a League of Nations for the prevention of war, the impulse behind that

effort draws its strength largely from the feeling Tolstoy voiced and fostered.

His denunciation of war is so scathing that he even carries many readers with him when he goes on to denounce patriotism as the cause of wars, and as being in itself a degrading superstition and a vice.

He argues that Christianity, with its doctrine of the Fatherhood of God, is fatal to patriotism; and that no justification can be framed of the sacrifices that are offered up on the altar of international jealousy—sacrifices sometimes as blind as, and far more numerous than, those offered in earlier ages to Moloch.

He ignores the sound basis for national feeling of a non-malevolent kind. If the world is to be organized, it must be arranged in divisions of manageable proportions; and once such divisions exist, since 'charity begins at home,' it is our business first of all to get matters rightly arranged in our own country.

Tolstoy pushed Non-Resistance further than any other prominent writer of modern times has done, and he baffles one's attempts to bring his conclusions to a practical test by asserting that human existence itself is of no value in comparison with the sanctity of the law he formulated. But by this assumption he evidently transfers the trial of the case to a future state of existence, and begs the essential question, which is whether his statement of the moral law is adequate.

No appeal to experience moved him in the least. I wrote an article on 'The Right and Wrong of Non-Resistance' (*Humane Review*, April 1905), and sent it to him. I thought he would either object to it, explain that I had presented his position incorrectly, or be compelled to admit that his case needed



restating. But all I got was a mild intimation that he was hurt at my not standing firm to the 'principle'; and when next I visited him, he said: 'I have only one thing to object to in your article: namely, that it destroys my position at its roots.' I fancy he meant to imply: 'If your arguments were sound, my principle would be unsound, which is a *reductio ad absurdum*.' He said it gently, quietly and with obvious premeditation, but I could not pursue the subject, for his daughter Mary had specially asked me not to excite him with discussion, as his health was causing anxiety. When I next saw him he was over eighty, and one hardly expects a man of that age to abandon a principle he has formulated with great effort and to which he has been wedded for many years.

Horrible as war is, to attempt to stop it by the method Tolstoy commends (of each conscientious man refusing to serve the State as soldier or to pay taxes) has the disadvantage that, if successful, it would disintegrate the State, and, if adopted by all humane people, it would throw the control of affairs into the hands of those who were not humane.

If I do not see eye to eye with Tolstoy on this subject, the difference is still greater in regard to civil Government. He maintained that Government, even in England, France or the United States, is a complete failure, since it does not secure a fair chance for each citizen to develop his powers, choose his way of life, and enjoy the fruits of his labour. That indictment is unanswerable if one compares what is with what should be. But if we regard the matter comparatively, and ask what known method of regulating human affairs involves least evil, then the existence of Constitutional Governments may well be defended.



Twenty-five years before Tolstoy formulated his indictment, Gladstone had written: 'Decision by majorities is as much an expedient as lighting by gas. In adopting it as a rule, we are not realizing perfection but bowing to an imperfection. It has the great merit of avoiding, and that by a test perfectly definite, the last resort to violence; and of making force itself the servant instead of the master of authority.' To which these words of Burke may be added: 'I am aware that the age is not what we all wish, but I am sure that the only means to check its degeneracy is heartily to concur in whatever is best in our time.'

In spite of his rejection of Government, Tolstoy (inconsistently enough) became an ardent adherent of Henry George's taxation of land-values. That writer's *Social Problems* and *Progress and Poverty*, with their deep feeling, lucid statement, broad outlook, indignation at existing inequalities, and absence of practical administrative detail, secured his warm sympathy, especially by the religious spirit which underlies those works.

It is a curious fact that, though Tolstoy neither aimed at nor approved of Constitutional government, yet his indictment of the Tsardom prepared the way for the downfall of the autocracy within a few years of his own death.

Tolstoy's attitude towards Government naturally led him to regard legislative measures of social reform with indifference. Professor Yanzhul tells us that previously, in the 'eighties, Tolstoy's attitude towards Factory Inspection—then just introduced in Russia—was sympathetic, and he was highly indignant when he heard of the insanitary abominations discovered at a certain sulphur-match factory. In the last years of his life however he became increasingly dogmatic

in his No-Government attitude, and correspondingly indifferent to any labour laws. Legislative enactments to preserve the workers from excessive exploitation, to insist that their wages should be paid regularly and in money, and to organize factory *crèches* and lying-in hospitals, no longer interested him. Having found a panacea he rejects palliatives. Unfortunately when it comes to getting the work of the world done, the panacea does not act !

*The Kingdom of God is Within You* contained a description of the flogging of peasants by a Governor ; and curiously enough, though the book was prohibited, it resulted in that Governor being dismissed from his post !

Tolstoy's active participation in the famine, together with his popularity as a writer and the abundant evidence of his disinterestedness and courage, had made him by this time the most conspicuous and influential unofficial person in Russia. His relations with the political reformers, however, were strangely dual. He cordially sympathized with their protests against oppression, and was on their side whenever they were ill-treated ; but when they approached power, or began to prepare for a Constitution, he turned his back upon them. The result was that their feelings towards him swung like a pendulum. Sometimes they were keenly sympathetic, while at other times they regarded him as a broken reed and poured fierce scorn on all his works.

His condemnation of patriotism was perhaps implicit in his religious writings of the early eighteenthies, but its clear and emphatic formulation in the 'nineties marks a further step on the course which made him the chief literary precursor of the Revolution.

## CHAPTER XVI

### THE DOUKHOBORS

IN 1894 Tolstoy wrote an interesting Preface to Guy de Maupassant's works, and also a small book entitled *Christianity and Patriotism*, which expressed a thoroughly cosmopolitan (or Tolstoy would have said, 'Christian') attitude, repudiating patriotism as entirely evil, and pouring ridicule on the enthusiasm then displayed at the French and Russian festivities held in connection with the visits of the respective fleets to Kronstadt and Toulon. Dr. Johnson had said that 'Patriotism is the last refuge of a scoundrel.' Tolstoy went further and denied that there can be such a thing as good patriotism, since men are all sons of one Father and should not restrict their sympathies by political boundaries.

Two other essays written that year deserve attention, for they were the first of a series of articles on religion, expressing a broader and maturer view than he had held ten years previously when his earlier works on this subject were composed. These are *Reason and Religion* and *Religion and Morality*. The others of the series are *How to Read the Gospels* (1896), *A Reply to the Synod's Edict of Excommunication* (1901), and *What is Religion?* (1902). They are quite brief (occupying in all less than a hundred pages of *Essays and Letters*) but are the final outcome and ripe fruit of

the intense struggles of a wonderful mind with the greatest of all problems.

*Religion and Morality* contains a notable criticism of Huxley's Romanes Lecture, delivered in 1894. It also gives Tolstoy's definition of religion and morality : ' Religion is a certain relation established by man between his separate personality and the infinite universe or its Source ; and morality is the ever-present guide to life resulting from that relation.'

The year 1895 began sadly both in public and private affairs. Nicholas II, stamping his foot at the representatives of the Zemstvos, had denounced their ' insensate fancies concerning the participation of representatives of the Zemstvos in the affairs of the Government of the country.' Tolstoy was highly indignant at this insult to Russia's representatives, and for a moment seemed to be almost at one with P. N. Milukov and the Liberals, except that he disapproved of any plans for organized resistance.

Following this public event came a great personal grief. His youngest son, little seven-year-old Vanya, died in February. It was the first time Tolstoy and his wife had lost a child that had outgrown early infancy. The blow was the more severe because Vanya was highly gifted and seemed to have inherited the best qualities of both his parents. To the Countess it was crushing. She dreaded going back to Yasnaya, where she would miss the child even more than in Moscow ; and plans were formed for going abroad. Tolstoy showed his wife great consideration. Much as it would have run counter to his inclination, he was ready to leave Russia for her sake ; but a private intimation reached them that, though no obstacle would be placed in the way of his leaving the country, it was improbable that he would be allowed



to return. The journey abroad was therefore abandoned.

Early that year Tolstoy finished a fine story, *Master and Man*, with the triumph of self-sacrifice over death as its theme.

How far he was from being an old man at this time (counting in years he was sixty-six) is indicated by the almost boyish ardour with which he took to cycling. Bicycles were then coming into use in Russia, and only those were allowed to ride them in the large towns who obtained a police licence after demonstrating their proficiency. Tolstoy presented himself for examination, easily performed the necessary horseshoe movement and a figure-of-eight, and rode off triumphantly with his permit.

The moral struggle continually going on within him sometimes showed itself in curious ways. When a friend wished to make him a birthday present of a new bicycle, Tolstoy went to the shop and selected one, but before it was delivered his conscience troubled him and he cancelled the order, continuing to use a shabby old bicycle belonging to one of his sons. Apropos of this, he told me it was so long since he had had any possession that needed taking care of, that he felt he ought not again to allow himself to be so cumbered.

He was continually pestered by demands for money from all sorts of people, and once remarked that he had thought of acquiring an inexhaustible purse to supply these demands, but finding that it would occupy his whole time to get out the money for those who wanted it, he preferred to do without the purse!

Grave and gay were closely mingled in the family life; they all lived so near to great problems and dangers, yet there was so much youth, mirth, art and animation among them. Contrasts help one to feel



keenly, and I have never been more struck by the charm of simple music than one winter's evening when, calling to ask Tolstoy's explanation on some point, I chanced upon a gathering of the family and their friends. Tolstoy was engaged. The company were in the large room in which they had tea and gathered for games and music. The eldest daughter came up to speak to me, and Mary, accompanying herself on a guitar, struck up a gipsy song which she sang admirably. Others joined in the chorus. Song followed song, and one felt that their love of music was innate. As I came to know them better, I realized how much amiability, talent, frankness and charm there was among them, apart from Tolstoy's own overpowering genius.

It was the custom of Tolstoy's followers to speak of the Countess as the great obstacle to his carrying out his principles, and to assume that, were he but free to act, excellent results would follow. Certainly the Countess's position was one of extreme difficulty. She never concealed her disagreement with many of his views, and often based her case frankly on grounds of family interest. Tried by ordinary standards she was an admirable wife—and to adopt extraordinary standards in her case, because her husband was an extraordinary man, would be unfair.

During the winters of 1895-97 I visited Tolstoy almost every week, and in summer sometimes stayed with him for a few days at Yasnaya.

The password to intimacy with him was intellectual integrity. Any one whom he recognized as honest and in earnest was his friend. He once remarked to me: 'I divide men into two sets. They are free-thinkers, or they are not freethinkers. I am not speaking of the agnostic English Freethinkers, but

use the word in its simplest meaning. Freethinkers are those who are willing to use their minds without prejudice and without fearing to understand things that clash with their own customs, privileges, or beliefs. This state of mind is not common, but is essential to right thinking. Where it is absent, discussion becomes worse than useless. A man may be a Catholic, a Frenchman, or a capitalist, and yet be a freethinker ; but if he puts Catholicism, patriotism, or his interest, above his reason, and will not give the latter free play where those subjects are touched, his mind is in bondage.'

Devotion to Non-Resistant and anti-Government views sometimes biased his judgment, but I had not cleared up my own views on those matters at the time I saw most of him, and was so far under his sway that we did not come into conflict about them.

Though Tolstoy's suspicions and love of contradiction were easily aroused, there was a wonderful charm about him, and I never met any one with such a capacity for encouraging, interesting and stimulating people. When he called at my house of an evening, our children were always delighted, and they still remember the paper birds with flapping wings he taught them to make.

An amusement we were both fond of was chess. He made it a social game by playing in a room full of people and not objecting to interruptions. He had no book-knowledge of it, but had played much and was alert and ingenious. I do not think a first-class professional player could have given more than the odds of a knight.

He read English quite easily, and did not speak it badly ; but when I tried to get him to talk English, he said : ' No, no ! With you I'll talk Russian ;

when I talk English, I have to say not what I want to, but what I can.'

During my first visit to Yasnaya, Tolstoy told me a story of his own efforts to do right in money matters. At the time he was studying and writing on economics, and trying to be particularly strict with himself in discarding all luxurious habits, he had occasion to visit his friend Prince Urusov, the Vice-Governor of Tula. The Prince was not at home, but the head police officer of the district was there and was exceedingly attentive and polite, offering his services and insisting on accompanying Tolstoy back to the station. It was 'Your Excellency' this, and 'Your Excellency' that, and there was no getting rid of the man. At the station he would not allow Tolstoy to take his own ticket, but needs must get it for him, and inquired: 'What class is Your Excellency pleased to travel?' with an air that seemed to say: 'Surely Your Excellency requires at least a special car!' Tolstoy's good intentions were not proof against such a strain. He felt that the shock to the police officer's feelings would be too great if he said 'Third class,' and he had to compromise by saying 'Second class'!

Speaking of the simplification of life, he once told me: 'There is one thing I cannot do without—I must have a quiet room to work in.' Even so reasonable and modest a demand as that, was in conflict with his teaching that we should yield up all we possess to anybody who likes to take it.

One day at a station a lady, mistaking Tolstoy for a peasant, sent him with a note to her husband who had gone into the refreshment-room. Tolstoy delivered the note and the lady gave him 15 kopeks (3d.). To her dismay she learnt that the man she had tipped was Count Tolstoy! She apologized and begged

him to give her back the 15 kopeks, but he only laughed and said: 'No, no! That is money I have earned!'

In 1898 he completed *What is Art?* (Scott Library, W. Scott Ltd., London, and Funk & Wagnalls, New York), which had been in hand for fifteen years. It is the best arranged and most closely argued of his didactic works. It is extremely readable, and though it aroused fierce opposition by the aggressive way in which it deals with the works of many great musicians, artists and writers, the fundamental theme of the book is profoundly true and most important. Its main position is that the great importance of art to mankind lies in the fact that through its manifold forms (jests, caricatures, mimicry, sketches, anecdotes, painting, sculpture, books, music, songs, dances, architecture and the drama) we are infected (for good or evil) by feelings the artists have experienced and transmitted to us. In this way we may become united in feeling, and in our minds 'the rails are laid along which our actions will naturally pass.' This view covers what Fletcher of Saltoun meant when he said: 'Let me make a nation's songs and who will may make its laws.'

It fell to my lot to translate *What is Art?* and, as the Censor mutilated the Russian original, Tolstoy wrote a Preface to the translation in which he requests 'all who are interested in my views on art only to judge of them by the work in its present shape.' This is perhaps a unique instance of a great writer preferring a translation to the published original of his own work.

Tolstoy was always so appreciative of any help one could render that it was very pleasant to work with him. In 1897 I ceased to live in Russia (where I had been resident for twenty-three years), and consequently



I ceased to see Tolstoy except when I paid him occasional visits, but we corresponded actively. In one letter that year he says :

‘ You ask my pardon, but I do not know how to excuse myself to you for the heavy labour you have taken on yourself and are executing so well.’ And again : ‘ You have quite correctly restored the words omitted on page 31. I will make my version agree with yours. Altogether I see you are doing this translation with great attention, for which I am grateful. I am almost sure I shall agree with all your comments, but still send them to me : I too will consider each point carefully.’

And in December : ‘ It is long since I wrote to you, dear friend, for I have been and still am going through much that is hard, I will not say bad for me, for it is in our power to turn evil into good ; but one is often not up to it. Also yesterday we moved to Moscow, which depresses me so by its bustle and immorality. That is why I have been slow in sending you the last chapters.’

In January 1898 he wrote : ‘ Forgive me for being so long in replying and for not sending you the corrected proofs. I have felt so weak lately that I could not force myself to work. When I did, I only spoilt things. I now send you the corrected chapters.’

One day, in 1895, when visiting a Moscow prison, Tolstoy met representatives of the Doukhor sect, who had come from the Caucasus to see their Leader, P. Verigin, then on his way from exile in Archangel to exile in Siberia.

Questioned by Tolstoy, these men told him that their sect practised non-resistance, abstained from meat and intoxicants, refused army service, rejected priests



or officials, and lived peacefully as equals without submitting to any government.

Tolstoy was delighted! Here at last was a large body of people professing and practising his principles and apparently furnishing an example of anarchism in successful operation. He wrote that what was taking place among them was 'the germinating of the seed sown by Christ 1900 years ago—the resurrection of Christ himself. . . . Here we have people who have realized this ideal . . . in a way we did not dream of doing with our complex State institutions . . . people who even now realize that towards which we are all striving!'

His estimate of them was mistaken, owing to the fact that they had omitted to tell him that they yielded implicit obedience to their Leader, Verigin, whom they believed to be divine. Persecution had taught them to screen their Leader and not involve him in any responsibility.

Tolstoy's authority was such that his statements on this matter were accepted by his followers without due verification, and resulted in a curious series of misunderstandings.

I have given a history of the Doukhobor sect in my book, *A Peculiar People: The Doukhobors*, and must here confine myself to mentioning that when the members of the scattered sect were allowed by Alexander I (early in the nineteenth century) to assemble and form a Community in the south of Russia, they encountered the practical difficulty of organizing the life of their Community while maintaining their repudiation of human law. The dilemma was met by the opportune discovery that one of their members (an ex-non-commissioned officer named Kapustin) was a reincarnation of the Deity! This

enabled them to obey his commands without committing the sin of submitting to man-made law. Kapustin's divine attributes and powers were transmitted, generation after generation, to successors in his family, till in 1886 they reached the present Leader, Peter Verigin. For some reason his authority was not recognized by the whole sect (then numbering about 20,000 persons) but only by a part of it. Quarrels broke out, the Russian authorities were appealed to, and Verigin was banished to the far north. His adherents used frequently to send representatives from the Caucasus to visit him, keep him supplied with money, and take his instructions for the government of the sect. It was such a deputation that Tolstoy had met in Moscow.

In exile Verigin met certain Tolstoyans, and from them he learnt Tolstoy's views ; which in many respects resembled the Doukhobor tenets of earlier days.

Verigin's own attitude towards Tolstoy's teaching was dual. He had no wish to play second fiddle to any man, and (being one of the few Doukhobors who could write) he sent letters to his Tolstoyan acquaintances in which he set himself to outdo Tolstoy. He said : ' If his (Tolstoy's) ideal has stopped short at making boots . . . then of course it is very, very inconsequent, for to make boots one requires needles, and needles are made in factories, and consequently it will not be possible to close the mines, where people are tortured to obtain ore.'

He recommended the abandonment of physical work and the adoption of a diet of fruit, and also questioned the justifiability of keeping cattle, cultivating land, or wearing clothes. He added : ' To follow Christ, we must live as he did, and we see that Christ did no physical work, nor did the Apostles. . . . That

they wore clothes and ate bread was natural, for there were plenty of clothes and bread, and (one must add) even Christ and the Apostles were not able all at once to go naked.'

To his own followers however he spoke very differently. Utilizing the Tolstoyan doctrine to deal a blow at the Government that was keeping him in exile, he advised his followers to refuse military service and to adopt non-resistant principles on Christian grounds.

The refusal of military service by the Doukhobors brought on them a fierce persecution. Tolstoy was eager to help them, and with some of his friends issued an appeal on their behalf entitled, *Help!* In this (being still under a misapprehension as to their real beliefs) he held them up as shining examples to humanity. As a result of this appeal some of his friends were banished to the Baltic Provinces, while Tchertkof (who was also concerned, but who had friends at Court) was allowed to settle in England, where he wished to live in order to arrange for the publication of Tolstoy's prohibited books. Prince D. A. Hilkov, who has been previously mentioned, was also allowed to go to England (after being banished first to the Caucasus and then to the Baltic Provinces), and like Tchertkof came to Purleigh, in Essex, where a Tolstoy colony had recently been started, and where I too settled about the same time (1897).

Prince Hilkov had been the youngest Colonel in the Russian Army, and had fought not merely the Turks but also the dishonest contractors with skill and courage. He was a very able administrator and greatly beloved by his men. He gave away his estates to his peasants, as has been previously mentioned. Being unorthodox he was denounced by the

priests and exiled to the Caucasus, where he lodged with some Doukhobors. They refused military service in 1895 (on Verigin's instructions), and the authorities (wrongly suspecting him of having influenced them) re-banished him, to the Baltic Provinces.

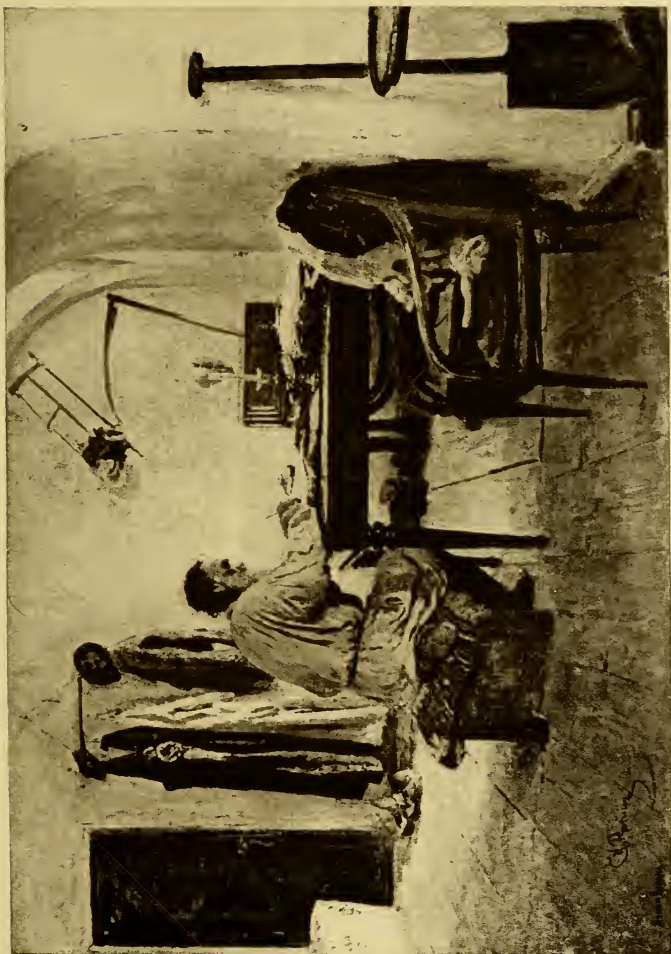
Hilkov was the only one of us who had lived with the Doukhobors, and when permission was obtained for them to migrate from Russia his great ability and organizing capacity marked him out as the best man to handle the matter.

Unfortunately Tolstoy had by that time entrusted the whole management of his propaganda to Tchertkof, who was therefore in control of the funds collected by the Tolstoyans in Russia and England to aid the Doukhobors, and who had set up a printing establishment and publishing business controlled by himself.

It was necessary for some one to go to Canada to make inquiries, and arrange for a migration of Doukhobors thither, but Tchertkof, having quarrelled with Hilkov, declined to provide for the travelling expenses of the latter, who having given his property to his peasants could not go at his own expense. In place of Hilkov, Tchertkof selected me for the task, and furnished me with an open letter stating that 'Aylmer Maude, a personal friend of Leo Tolstoy's, and of myself, has very kindly undertaken to go to America with the special object of trying to pave the way for such an emigration. . . . We have placed the negotiations in America entirely in his hands, and request all who may co-operate in this undertaking to regard him as possessing our full and unlimited confidence.'

I was glad to undertake the mission, and at first assumed that Tchertkof must have some sufficient reason for rejecting Hilkov's assistance. It happened





TOLSTOY IN HIS ROOM AT YASNAYA POLYANA

*From a painting by Repin, 1890*





however that two pioneer Doukhobor families were accompanying me to Canada, to judge of the country and to serve as samples of their sect for the Canadian authorities. These Doukhobors naturally wished to have Hilkov's co-operation, and fortunately money for his expenses was obtained elsewhere. So Hilkov accompanied us to Canada, and his knowledge of the Doukhobors and of their methods of agriculture, as well as his personal tact and ability, proved very valuable.

We were instructed to assure the Canadian Government that the Doukhobors would make excellent and docile settlers, and we took with us a book entitled *Christian Martyrdom in Russia*, edited by Tchertkof, which stated that 'in all that does not infringe what they regard as the will of God, they willingly fulfil the wishes of the authorities.'

We found Canada very suitable for their settlement, and obtained for the Doukhobors exemption from military service. A Report from the Minister of the Interior, approved by the Governor-General in Council on 6th December 1898, stated that 'arrangements have been completed with Mr. Aylmer Maude . . . the representative of the sect of Russians known as the Doukhobors . . . for the immediate immigration to Canada of several thousands of these people . . .' and it granted them unconditional exemption from military service.

As a result, 7363 Doukhobors left the Caucasus early the next year and settled in Canada.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> The best recent account of the Doukhobors in Canada is given in a *Report of the Royal Commission on the Sect of Doukhobors in British Columbia*, 1912 (written by W. Blakemore). It states that 'the Doukhobors are desirable settlers from the standpoint of their personal character, farming skill, devotion to agriculture, and

The fact that the Doukhobors owed allegiance to Verigin, who was then in Siberia, and were unable to take decisions without him (but kept their allegiance to him a profound secret) was bound to cause trouble and confusion; but it was Tchertkof's action that precipitated the trouble. Without consulting those who were in touch with the Doukhobors, he issued in Russian from his own press, and circulated gratuitously among those Doukhobors who could read, the absurd letters Verigin had written to the Tolstoyans.

These were read out to the Doukhobor congregations, accepted by them as revelations, and led to 1500 people abandoning their homes, refusing to use metals, releasing their sheep, cattle and horses, and—when they expected Verigin (at last released from Siberia) to be arriving in Canada—setting off on a pilgrimage eastward 'to find Christ.' Some of them even adopted Verigin's suggestion that clothes are unnecessary, and went about naked, to the consternation of their Canadian neighbours.

More serious still was the fact (which I accidentally discovered) that, under guise of supplying the Doukhobors with Anglo-Russian *Handbooks* (printed at the Tchertkof Press) to enable them to learn English, a propaganda of anarchist doctrines among them was begun in a way directly calculated to bring about strife with the Canadian Government, who had been emphatically assured that the Doukhobors would not cause trouble.

general industry. . . . Peter Verigin is their one and only arbiter. . . . The real problem before the Government is not the Doukhobors, but their leader—Peter Verigin.'

The Report, though generally accurate, errs in stating that exemption from military service was only granted *after* the Doukhobors had reached Canada. The fact is that they only started for Canada after being assured on that point.

The following are a few sentences from these extraordinary *Handbooks* :

' All governments are based on violence. They are upheld by armies, law-courts, prisons and police. . . .

' The population of Canada consists of the original inhabitants—the red Indians, and of emigrants from Europe. . . . And now 7500 Doukhobors from the Caucasus. . . . The Indians . . . are very badly treated . . . and deprived of all their rights. . . . The greedy Europeans came and began to destroy them and take away their land . . . they shed blood everywhere, and oppress those weaker than themselves. . . .

' Concerning the registration of marriages, births, and deaths. Do you promise always to fulfil this? . . . We cannot promise anything. A promise is the same as an oath. Our religion forbids us to take an oath. Christ said : " Do not swear." A man must be free. A promise ties the conscience and the actions of a man. Even in little things we want to be free ! . . . Our faith is just the same as that of Jesus Christ.

' We think there ought not to exist any private property in land . . . land, like air and water, should be for the use of all. He owns the land, who, for the time being, is working it.'

To the Doukhobors, who had just escaped from persecution, the suggestion that the population of Canada consists of greedy oppressors who ill-treat the weaker sections of the population was naturally very disquieting.

The point about the registration of births, deaths and marriages was that the Canadian Government required this, and the Doukhobors were hesitating about complying with the demand. The paragraph about land again dealt with a matter of great importance, as the grant of 160 acres of land to each

adult male, depended on formal entry being made by a certain date, and about this matter, too, the Doukhobors were hesitating, fearing by accepting the laws of Canada to compromise their allegiance to Verigin.

I was loth to come into conflict with Tchertkof, who was Tolstoy's delegate, but the position in which this discovery placed Prince Hilkov and myself was very unsatisfactory. We had honestly assured the Canadian Government and the contributors to the Emigration Fund that the Doukhobors were desirable settlers, and had thereby secured for them admission to Canada, and a large grant of land and money, besides special exemptions. We now found that, behind our backs, the Tchertkof organization, with its funds and its press, were being used to stir up unnecessary strife between these poor ignorant peasants and the Government to which they had been recommended.

Tchertkof would listen to no remonstrance. His methods were as autocratic as his maxims were fraternal. All I could do was to publish an article (which ultimately grew into my book *A Peculiar People*) frankly telling the story of the Doukhobors as far as I had then come to know it. I felt sure that Tolstoy, on being informed of the facts, would modify his published opinion of the sect, and use his influence to put matters right. It so happened, however, that it was long before we could unravel all the facts of the case and make sure of the nature of Verigin's influence. Meanwhile Tolstoy's health and memory were failing. By 1903 he was seventy-five years old, had become very dependent on Tchertkof for the business management of his propaganda, and was reluctant to take any action which would undermine that gentleman's authority. He preferred to hope that Tchertkof's



understanding of the Doukhobors (which was in contradiction to that of those who lived with them) was the true one.

The fact of the matter was, I think, best put by Tolstoy's devoted daughter, Mary, who, when I visited Yasnaya in 1902, said: 'It is my father's weakness that he relies so much on Tchertkof.'

## CHAPTER XVII

### ILLNESS AND EXCOMMUNICATION

**F**OR the last thirty years of his life Tolstoy was torn between a desire to prove the sincerity of his preference for a life of poverty, and considerations of affection and duty that kept him at home.

The first of these feelings is shown in a letter he wrote on 8th June 1897, found among his papers after his death, with the inscription : ‘ Unless I leave directions to the contrary this letter is to be handed to Sophia Andreyevna after my death.’ This is the letter :

‘ DEAR SONYA,—I have long been<sup>1</sup> tormented by the discord between my life and my beliefs. I could not compel you all to change your life and habits, to which I myself had accustomed you ; and I also could not, till now, leave you, for fear of depriving the children while still small of what little influence I may have over them and grieving you. On the other hand, I cannot continue to live as I have lived these sixteen years, struggling, and irritating you, or myself falling under influences and temptations to which I have become accustomed and by which I am surrounded ; and I have now decided to do what I have long desired—to go away ; first because for me, in my advancing years, this life becomes more and more burdensome and I long more and more for solitude ; and secondly because the

children are now grown up, my influence is no longer needed, and you all have livelier interests which will render my absence little noticeable.

‘The chief thing is that just as Hindoos nearing sixty retire into the woods, and as old religious men seek to devote their last years to God and not to jokes, puns, gossip, or tennis, so for me, entering my seventieth year, the desire which absorbs my whole soul is for tranquillity, for solitude, and if not for entire harmony, at least to avoid crying discord between my life and my beliefs and conscience.

‘If I did this openly there would be entreaties, pleadings, criticism, quarrels, and I might perhaps weaken and not carry out my decision—yet it must be carried out. And so, please forgive me if my act causes you pain; and above all, in your soul, Sonya, leave me free to go and do not repine or condemn me.

‘That I have gone away from you does not mean that I am displeased with you. I know you could not—literally could not and cannot—see and feel as I do, and therefore could not and cannot change your life and sacrifice yourself for something you do not recognize. And therefore I do not blame you, but on the contrary recall with love and gratitude the long thirty-five years of our life together—especially the first half of that period, when you, with the maternal devotion of your nature, so firmly and energetically fulfilled what you considered to be your duty. You have given me and the world what you could give. You have given great motherly love and devotion, and you cannot but be prized for that. But during the last period of our life—the last fifteen years—we have drifted asunder. I cannot think I am to blame, for I know I changed not for myself, nor for other people’s sake, but because I could do no other. Neither can I

blame you for not following me, but I thank you and lovingly remember and shall continue to remember you for what you gave me. Good-bye, dear Sonya.—Your loving  
LEO TOLSTOY'

That he did not leave home, and that the letter was not then delivered, may be explained by a conversation I had with him some months previously, in which he said that, often as he had desired to change his way of life, he had on reflection always come to the conclusion that it would be wrong to do so, knowing as he did that it would not merely grieve but anger his wife.

I was convinced that he had judged rightly, and felt sure he would never of his own accord abandon his wife. Five years later he wrote me apropos of an attack on his wife: 'My relations with my wife, my respect and love for her, and our forty-years cordial family life are too well known to our friends, and my wife is known to too many people, for an article by some journalist or other to do her reputation any harm.'

In December 1898 he wrote: 'As for myself, I have been quite absorbed for a couple of months past in my novel (*Resurrection*), which is progressing, and of which I begin to see the end.'

On 24th December he wrote me: 'Tchertkof writes that he does not wish to, and cannot attend further to the affairs of the Doukhobors, part of which consists of the publication and sale of the translations of my novel . . . so we are obliged to place all our hopes on you. Ashamed as I am to ask you to take on yourself a new task, after you have just finished your labour for the common cause, I cannot do otherwise. . . . So then, dear friend, please do not refuse to help us, and reply soon, to set our minds at rest.'

Circumstances prevented my undertaking that work,

and Tchertkof resumed his control. My wife however translated the novel, and her work received Tolstoy's very cordial endorsement and approval. In his next letter Tolstoy wrote :

'DEAR FRIEND,—I have received all three of your letters. . . . I am very glad that your kind wife is making the translation. I am now sending another seventeen chapters. . . . The work goes slower than I anticipated, because I have been ailing all this winter—backaches and general weakness.'

The novel appeared when he was over seventy, but shows a vigorous command of his art comparable to that displayed in *War and Peace* thirty years before. Unlike that novel or *Anna Karenina*, it was not primarily written to please, but deliberately aimed at imparting the author's sympathies and antipathies on social, political and religious questions. It is remarkable how he has packed into it his views on almost every important question that troubles the mind of man. In England and America the book has had a larger sale than any other work of Tolstoy's.<sup>1</sup>

Tolstoy's remarkable *Letter on the Hague Conference* was written in 1898. The appeal sent out to the nations by the young Tsar, Nicholas II, to consider the question of the reduction of armaments and various other mitigations of war, delighted most of the friends of peace ; but Tolstoy poured fierce scorn on the whole affair, maintaining that the Conference could be nothing but an act of hypocrisy intended to hide the only path by which peace can be attained. He declared that Governments never can or will

<sup>1</sup>The library edition (with remarkably fine illustrations by Pasternak) is published by Constable & Co., London, and by Dodd, Mead & Co., New York. There is also a pocket edition in the World's Classics Series issued by the Oxford University Press.



diminish their armaments ; but that ' armies will first diminish and then disappear, when public opinion brands with contempt those who, whether from fear or for advantage, sell their liberty and enter the ranks of those murderers called soldiers.' Not the reformation of Government but the utter rejection of Government was his line, and it was never expressed more harshly, nor, I am tempted to add, more malapropos than on this occasion.

In a letter to me in January 1900 he wrote :

' My health has not been good all this time ; but as, in order to die, there is but one way, namely by being ill—just as in order to move from one place to another there is no way except to get into a carriage or a railway car—I do not object to my illness, especially as it is not painful, and allows me to think and even to work. I am now chiefly occupied with an article on the Labour Question. I have already written on that subject, but it seems to me that I have something new to say and I hope to say it simply and clearly.'

The book referred to was *The Slavery of Our Times*, a sequel (to my mind a disappointing one) to *What Then Must We Do?* The former work left us in doubt as to the solution of the problem of poverty, but it dealt with realities and was vivid and moving. *The Slavery of Our Times* is more abstract, and, though it gives a definite reply, that reply is ' Non-Resistance '—abstention from all share in Governmental activity. This was indeed Tolstoy's main theme to a monotonous extent during the last ten years of his life.

On 30th August he sent me a letter saying :

' DEAR MAUDE,—I am not writing to you with my own hand, because I have been for some time ill with my customary, very weakening illness. I received

your pamphlet [*Leo Tolstoy: A Short Biography*] and approve of it very much. It is admirably constructed and what is most essential is given.

'Your article on *What is Art?* pleased me exceedingly, so clearly and powerfully is the fundamental thought expressed.' [This referred to an article in the *Contemporary Review*, August 1900.]

Tolstoy's health continued to be very unsatisfactory, and his work was frequently interrupted. Mention of this occurs in a letter to me on 23rd November 1900 :

'Before moving to Moscow, I visited my daughter Tanya in the country, and there had influenza or something of that kind; at any rate since then for more than a month I have felt very weak and disinclined to work. At first this distressed me but now I begin to get accustomed to it. One can learn to live without mental activity if only one's moral activity does not cease, and that is what I aim at with more or less success.'

As the months wore on, his state of health became more and more critical, and on 18th January 1901 he wrote :

'I was quite unwell, kind friend Maude, when I asked — to write to you for me. Now I am better and add these lines to say a few more words. My illness consisted of suppressed feverishness, causing great weakness and at times intensifying my usual liver disease.

'When I am in a good spiritual state, I am glad of my approaching liberation from the body. But when I am carried away by my wish to do things I have planned, I regret my lack of strength.'

On 25th March 1901 he wrote :

'DEAR FRIEND,—I have received your good letter.

. . . As to the money your wife wishes to give for useful work [money received from her translation of *Resurrection*] I have no advice to give. The Doukhobors, thank God, are well off in Canada, and I think there is no particular need in Yakutsk. So deal with the money as God puts in your heart.—Your loving,  
 ‘ L. TOLSTOY ’

On 22nd February that year the Holy Synod had startled the world by launching against Tolstoy a decree of Excommunication. It concluded with the words :

‘ Many of those near to him, retaining their faith, reflect with sorrow that he, at the end of his days, remains without faith in God and in our Lord and Saviour, having rejected the blessings and prayers of the Church and all communion with her.’

The Countess at once wrote to the Procurator of the Holy Synod and the Metropolitan Bishop Antonius a letter in which she said : ‘ When I see this Excommunication pronounced by the Church to which I belong, and to which I shall always belong, . . . whose mission is to proclaim the law of charity, the remission of sins, love of our enemies and of those that hate us, whose duty towards all is to pray for all, then I am at a loss to understand ! This Excommunication will call forth not the approval, but the indignation of men, and will bring Leo Nikolayevich fresh demonstration of love and sympathy. They are already coming to us from all parts of the world ! ’

The decree produced a tremendous sensation, and in some people it aroused anger and hatred against Tolstoy, culminating in threats to murder him. His books were excluded from some of the public libraries. The newspapers were forbidden to mention demonstrations made in his honour. The Censor stopped the

reproduction of his portrait in an illustrated paper, and even a Moscow Temperance Society expelled him from membership; but these indications of disapproval were very temporary and insignificant.

From Tolstoy himself the edict evoked a most noble and inspiring *Reply (Essays and Letters)*, worthy to rank among the greatest pronouncements on liberty of conscience ever uttered by man; and it soon became evident that the Excommunication had missed fire.

On the day the edict was made public, some one exclaimed, as Tolstoy was crossing a public square, 'See! There goes the devil in human form!' But the crowd—instead of hustling or attacking him as a year or two previously might easily have happened to any one denounced by the Church—cheered him heartily.

The signs of public sympathy that reached him were exceedingly numerous and cordial. It was a moment when (as had been the case during the famine ten years before) he appeared in the forefront of the movement of emancipation, and the deep-seated divergence between him and the Constitutionalists dropped out of sight.

On Tolstoy himself the Excommunication had exceedingly little effect, and he greeted friends who came to see him with the words, 'I positively decline to accept congratulations.'

A few weeks later, apropos of some disturbances which had occurred, Tolstoy wrote an *Appeal to the Tsar and his Chief Ministers* which was delivered to them but not published at the time. After warning them that the day would soon come when they could no longer rely on the soldiers or the police, he enumerated the demands of the people, which he summed up as follows: (1) Equal rights for the peasants;

(2) abolition of special enactments overriding the Common Law; (3) liberty of education, and (4) Religious liberty.

'Such,' he concluded, 'are the modest and easily realizable desires, we believe, of the immense majority of the Russian people. The adoption of these measures would undoubtedly pacify the people and free them from those terrible sufferings and (what is worse than sufferings) crimes, which will inevitably be committed on both sides if the Government busies itself only with the suppression of disturbances, leaving their cause untouched. Only if this is done,' said Tolstoy to the Tsar, 'can your position be safe and really strong.'

Read in the light of subsequent events the letter appears truly prophetic.

Andrew D. White, who was American Minister at Petersburg, giving an account of a visit he paid to Tolstoy, remarks that, in a land which had till then known no public body in which the discussion of large public questions was allowed, a Russian thinker, from lack of meeting other men of similar calibre to his own, 'having given birth to striking ideas, coddles and pets them until they become the full-grown spoilt children of his brain. He can see neither spot nor blemish in them and at last virtually believes himself infallible.' He applies these remarks to Tolstoy, and adds that 'his love of humanity, real though it certainly is, is accompanied by a depreciation of the ideas, statements and proposals of almost every other human being, and by virtual intolerance of all thought which differs in the slightest degree from his own.' White says all this while fully admitting the influence of Tolstoy's striking and sincere personality, and I cannot deny that if instead of having his works sup-



pressed Tolstoy had had them fairly criticized it would have been good both for him and for them.

White records several characteristic remarks Tolstoy made to him. Speaking of the Mormons, he said that no doubt two-thirds of their religion is deception, but on the whole 'he preferred a religion which professed to have dug its sacred book out of the earth, to one which pretended that it was let down from heaven.'

White noticed Tolstoy's habit of giving copper money to the beggars who swarmed in Moscow, even when he knew they wanted it for vodka. In reply to a remonstrance, Tolstoy said that in such cases the results of our actions are not the main thing, but the cultivation of better feelings in the giver.

No doubt we harsher people of the West have much to learn from Russian warm-heartedness, but I always felt that in this respect, and in some others, Tolstoy held to the ways commended by religious Russians in the past, without sufficiently testing their soundness.

After the excitement of his Excommunication, Tolstoy's health, which had seemed to rally, again failed him, and in June he was seriously unwell.

After a stay at his eldest daughter's he lost his way when walking to the station, over-fatigued himself, and returned to Yasnaya quite ill. On 29th June his strength failed and the action of his heart became very irregular. After recovering from a serious crisis which brought him near to death, he remarked to his daughter: 'The sledge was at the door, and I had only to get in and go; but suddenly the horses turned round and the vehicle was sent away. It's a pity, for it was a good sledge-road and when I'm ready to start again it may be rough.'

The improvement in his health did not last. On

3rd July he could scarcely speak, and the doctor pronounced his condition very serious. His complaint was angina pectoris, and a stay in a warmer climate was recommended.

The Countess Panin gladly lent her palace at Gaspra, in the Crimea, to the Tolstoys when she heard that the doctors recommended a warmer climate ; and the Minister of Railways, Prince Hilkov (an uncle of Prince D. A. Hilkov previously mentioned), promptly gave orders that a special through-car should be coupled to any train selected, to enable Tolstoy to travel to Sevastopol without changing.

At Gaspra the weather was warm and fine, and Tolstoy's health improved rapidly. Having settled in his new surroundings, he again began to write. His Caucasian story, *Hadji Murad* (published after his death by Nelson & Sons, London, and Dodd, Mead & Co., New York), was more or less of a recreation for him ; but he worked very seriously at *What is Religion ?*

On 23rd September 1901, he wrote to me saying :

' My work on religion progresses very slowly and with difficulty, in spite of the fact that the more I think on this subject the more I see its importance, and I very much desire to express what I think about it.

' I am living amid pleasant nature and climate and all possible comforts of life, but I feel that mental energy is absent, though I do not know whether this comes from illness or from material satisfaction.'

Chehof and Gorky—the well-known authors—both visited him, and Goldenweiser, the pianist, used to come and play for him ; but in general he lived a very quiet life, which allowed him to concentrate on his work whenever he was well enough to do so.

On 23rd December he wrote to me again of the volume *Sevastopol and Two Hussars* (Constable & Co., London): 'I think I already wrote to you how unusually the first volume of your edition pleases me. All in it is excellent: the edition and the preface, and chiefly the translation, and yet more the conscientiousness with which all this has been done. I happened to open it at *Two Hussars*, and read on to the end, just as if it were something new and written in English.

'My health fluctuates but does not prevent my working, for which I am very grateful. However, even without that, I cannot but be grateful to Him who has made possible for me so beautiful a life as that which is at my disposal.'

In January 1902 he had another bad attack of palpitation of the heart and was again seriously ill with angina pectoris.

On 16th January, believing that he had not long to live, he completed another letter to the Tsar, in which, after recounting the ills from which Russia was suffering, he declared that neither Orthodoxy nor Autocracy was any longer suitable for Russia.

'Autocracy is an obsolete form of Government which may suit the demands of people cut off from the world somewhere in Central Africa but not the demands of the Russian people, who are growing ever more and more enlightened . . . and therefore that form of Government and the Orthodoxy bound up with it can only be upheld (as is now being done) by violence. Measures of coercion make it possible to oppress, but not to govern, a people. To be able to do that, it is necessary first of all to let them express their wishes and needs and, having heard them, to fulfil those which respond to the demands not of one

class or section but of the majority—the mass of the working-people.’

Then follows an enumeration of those demands: ‘the abolition of special laws making pariahs of the peasants; freedom to migrate; freedom of education; freedom of conscience; and above all, the whole 100 million people will say with one voice that they desire freedom to use the land—that is to say, the abolition of private property in land.’

Apart from the wisdom or otherwise of his specific proposals, what attracts one always in Tolstoy is his courage, sincerity and ardent desire that the conditions of life of the people should be improved.

His illness was at this time complicated by inflammation of the lungs. In February he was better, but in May he was again at death’s door, this time with enteric fever. Once more his marvellous recuperative power manifested itself, and at last, in June, his homeward journey began. Too weak to be driven by road, he was taken to Sevastopol by steamer.

The chief work he wrote during his stay at Gaspra was *What is Religion?* (*Essays and Letters.*)

Whenever he took a great subject and chewed the cud of reflection about it, if only he was not drawn astray by his pet prejudices, he produced a masterpiece; and that this admirable essay is not better known, can only be explained by supposing that it has been swamped in the stream of Non-Resistant articles which preceded and succeeded it.

After *What is Religion?* Tolstoy wrote nothing of equal scope and importance, though one or two notable utterances were still to come.

In August 1902 I once more visited him. The plain, substantial country-house at Yasnaya—roomy and well adapted to its purpose, though with old-



fashioned, rather bare furniture, worn bare-board floors in many of the rooms and window-frames that needed repairs and renewal—made a different impression on me each time I went there. On this occasion, the large grounds seemed even more neglected and overgrown than of yore, as though announcing that their former master was absorbed in matters more serious than the trimness of his gardens.

Tolstoy himself had sufficiently recovered his health to be able to go for a two-hours' walk, though on returning home he was glad to be helped upstairs. Once or twice he dropped asleep in his chair.

He had, as we know, always been sceptical of medicine and doctors, and it was amusing to hear the Countess tell of his surprise at finding, at the time of his greatest weakness, that it really had a stimulating effect when they administered to him injections of camphor.

Speaking to his doctors, when already convalescent, he said: 'Well, gentlemen, I have always spoken badly of doctors, but now that I have got to know you better, I see that I did you great injustice. You are really very good men and know all that your science teaches: the only pity is—that *it* knows nothing!'

From the time of his return from the Crimea there was always a doctor resident at Yasnaya on his account; but before he would consent to this he stipulated that the doctor must also be at the disposal of the neighbouring peasants.

During my visit I was particularly impressed by the atmosphere of love and respect that surrounded Tolstoy from all about him and from the visitors of all sorts and conditions who came to see him. His two younger daughters were doing most of the work of copying his MSS. and assisting him with his corre-



spondence. The elder of the two, the Princess Mary Obolensky, besides sharing her father's feelings and outlook on life, shared also his frank and friendly manner of speech, and had a remarkably good influence in the family.

The Countess Sophia Andreyevna, who, though scornful of some of his beliefs, was most solicitous about her husband's health and comfort, spoke with great frankness about both his qualities and limitations. She said that he had an artist's eye for clear and striking characteristics, but over-simplified his judgments of people. When he had seized on a trait in some one's character, he often let it blind him to other features; and on this account he did not always read even his own children aright.

Tolstoy's sister, the Countess Mary N. Tolstoy, who had become a nun, and lived at the Shamardino Convent, and to whom, despite the difference in their religious outlook, he was greatly attached, was staying at the house, having obtained leave of absence from her Nunnery on account of her brother's ill-health.

Among the other guests were V. V. Stasov, the well-known critic and author, Head of the Imperial Academy Library at St. Petersburg, and M. A. Stahovich, *Maréchal de la Noblesse* of Orel, both old friends of the family; also the sculptor Ginzburg, who was modelling a bust of Tolstoy, and Taneyev, the composer, who played a new piece he had written. On the Sunday afternoon a Jewish clerk living in the neighbourhood came to consult Tolstoy on religion; next day a telegram arrived from a friendly Grand Duke; and every day pilgrims, tramps and destitute peasants called to beg, and did not go empty away.

The Countess mentioned that a foreign publisher had recently offered a million roubles for the permanent

copyright of her husband's works, but that the latter held rigidly to his repudiation of all such rights. Another publisher, Marx, was offering 100,000 roubles for a copyright limited to two years, but with no better success. Yet when I spoke to Tolstoy of my own reasons for copyrighting my translations he made no objection, but said: 'It is a matter I have not considered carefully with reference to its practical working, and I can only put a note of interrogation to it.' From what he said I was convinced that the action taken by the Free Age Press (which published his works during the last decade of his life) in this matter had not been prompted or demanded by him, though he acquiesced in and approved of its announcement of 'no rights reserved,' and even believed that announcement to indicate a moral achievement on Tchertkof's part.

Tolstoy's physical weakness was very noticeable, but almost the only sign of mental debility was that he had for the time being abandoned his favourite game of chess. Cards taxed his attention less, and he played each evening, winning small sums on the days I was there.

The subject nearest his heart, to which he returned oftenest, was religion. Speaking of his illness, he said with a smile that he had gained so much by it that 'I can only wish you all to be ill.'

He spoke of love as the motive power of life. God is Love. We cannot increase the measure we possess, and should not try to force it. How can we control that which controls us? But we can remove all that hinders it; and can pay attention to it, recognizing its importance.

To hear this rugged old man, with his shaggy, prominent eyebrows, piercing eyes and ruthless

criticisms, insisting earnestly on the supreme importance of love, was rather strange. One felt, as in the similar case of St. Paul, that the tribute to love is the greater because uttered by one who impresses us primarily not by his power of sympathy but by his intellectual force.

I cannot adequately describe the peaceful yet animated atmosphere of the home at that time, crowded with vital interests, throbbing with life, overrun with visitors, but so influenced by the high and earnest tone of the great man we all looked up to that it felt more bracing and peaceful than any circle I was ever in. I see that, on leaving, I jotted down in my notebook: 'A remarkable and kindly family, apart from Tolstoy's genius. His influence is felt in the simplicity, frankness, kindness and consideration shown to all in the place.'

In November he completed his scathing *Appeal to the Clergy (Essays and Letters)*, which certainly hits them fifty times harder than the Excommunication hit him. Since Luther denounced the Catholic Church for the sale of Indulgences, no indictment so full of moral indignation against a shameful trafficking in falsehood has, I suppose, ever been hurled at any body of men.

In April 1903 he published letters protesting against the Jew-baiting and pogroms in Kishinev and Gomel. In these letters he expresses abhorrence, 'of the real culprit in the whole matter, namely our [Russian] Government, with its priesthood which stupefies the people and makes fanatics of them, and its robber-band of officials. The Kishinev crime is a direct consequence of the propaganda of lies and violence carried on with such intensity and insistence by the Russian Government.'

He contributed *Esarhaddon* and two other short stories (*Twenty-three Tales*) for the relief of the sufferers in those riots.

An article he had written in 1890 on the assassination of King Humbert, entitled *Thou Shalt Not Kill* had been prohibited in Russia; the German edition of it was seized for *lèse majesté* in July 1903, and was destroyed.

The following is the passage the prosecution relied on :

‘ What, indeed, must be going on in the head of some Wilhelm of Germany—a narrow-minded, ill-educated, vain man, with the ideals of a German Junker—when there is nothing he can say so stupid or horrid that it will not be met by an enthusiastic “ Hoch ! ” and be commented on by the press of the whole world as though it were something highly important? When he says that, at his word, soldiers should be ready to kill their own fathers, people shout “ Hoch ! ” When he says that the Gospel must be introduced with an iron fist—“ Hoch ! ” When he says the army is to take no prisoners in China but to slaughter everybody, he is not put in a lunatic asylum, but people shout “ Hoch ! ” and set sail for China to execute his commands’ (*Essays and Letters*, p. 266). The next paragraph in the article is an almost equally scathing description of Nicholas II.

The events then occurring in Russia were such as to grieve Tolstoy profoundly. The useless and disastrous war with Japan outraged not only his religious principles but also a latent patriotism, the existence of which he had hardly suspected in himself until he nearly wept at the news of the fall of Port Arthur.

*Bethink Yourselves*, a vigorous denunciation of that war, and of war in general, was written in May 1904.



Then came the rapid growth of the Revolutionary movement in Russia. To some of us the outstanding need of the situation appeared to be the establishment of a Constitutional Government which would make law supreme over the caprice of officials and even over the Tsar himself. Feeling in this way, our sympathies went out particularly to the Leaders of the Constitutional movement. The dangerous people were, on the one hand, the Tsar's entourage, fighting to hold their places, power and perquisites, and, on the other hand, the zealots who wished by a *coup-de-main* to inflict a millennium on the people.

At that moment of doubt and confusion, there was no man in Russia whose word would have been more useful to the Constitutionalists, had he cared to support them, than Tolstoy. He had of late repeatedly and scathingly condemned the Tsardom and its methods; not less uncompromisingly had he denounced the Revolutionary movement and the Socialists. To many it seemed that the logic of the situation would oblige him to throw his weight on the side of the Constitutional reformers: the Zemstvo leaders, the moderate, practical, experienced and efficient workers who were claiming for themselves a larger sphere of national usefulness.

But Tolstoy would not budge, and the Princess Mary Obolensky wrote me from Pirogovo, on 22nd January 1905: 'I have lately returned from Yasnaya, where I spent two months. My father was well, but he is tormented by demands made on him to take part in current events. The Liberals want to draw him into their camp, the Conservatives into theirs, and the Revolutionaries into theirs, and he does not belong to any one of them, and only asks to be left in peace. People do not understand and do not admit his point



of view, and think that in consequence of what is happening in Russia he must come down from his Christian standpoint and say something new, something they want him to say. In general the war and all that is now happening in Russia is depressing, and weighs like a heavy burden on us all.'

In 1905 and 1906 Tolstoy wrote a fresh series of five short stories, the first of which was *Korney Vasilyev*, but they were not as good or as popular as those he had previously written.

In August 1906 the even tenor of life at Yasnaya Polyana was disturbed by the Countess falling very seriously ill. Tolstoy was greatly distressed. He said to her one day: 'Now that you are laid up and do not go about the house, I miss the sound of your footstep; and do you know, missing that, I can neither read nor write properly!' When however on 2nd September, the doctor in charge announced that an operation they had had in view for some time for the removal of an intestinal gathering must be performed at once or the patient would die, and die in agony—an unwillingness to incur moral responsibility, similar to that which had caused him to refuse to deal with property, showed itself in his reply. He said:

'I am pessimistic about my wife's health. She is suffering from a serious illness. The great, solemn and touching moment of death approaches, and we ought to submit to the will of God. . . . I am opposed to an interference which in my opinion infringes the solemnity of the great event. . . . We must all die to-day, to-morrow, or in five years. . . . I understand that you, as a doctor, cannot act otherwise, and I stand aside: I am neither for nor against it. My children are assembling; my eldest son, Sergey, will be here. . . . Let them decide how to act. . . . Sophia

Andreyevna herself must of course also be asked. If she has no objection, then you can do your business.'

The Countess, whose sufferings were extreme, was strongly in favour of the operation, which was performed; and after three critical days the patient began to regain strength, and within a month was quite well.

I visited them late in October—later in the year than ever before—and the autumnal aspect of the scene as I drove through woodland and over pleasant undulating country for the two miles from the railway station may have had something to do with the impression that came over me when I reached Tolstoy's house. When I had visited it in 1902 it had been full of visitors coming and going day by day. Now I found only members of the family, the atmosphere was quieter, and the pulses of life throbbed less strongly. Tolstoy himself had been better in health that summer, but at the time of my visit was suffering, as he frequently did, from digestive troubles. His daughter Mary, Princess Obolensky, was not well, and her weakness seemed to be reflected in the whole atmosphere of the place.

During the afternoon of the day I arrived Tolstoy rode over to Tula on horseback. Another sign of improvement in his health was that he again played chess, and did so, I was told, every evening he could find an opponent.

With the Revolution he expressed no sympathy. 'No improvement in a people's condition can be effected that does not rest on a *moral* basis,' said he, and for him it was a settled axiom that no political action could rest on such a basis. That is where he differs from Prince D. A. Hilkov, who once wrote to him: 'I admit that we all of us have to die, and

that our work on earth should be to fulfil the will of God as each of us understands it. But why not admit that it is possible for men sincerely to believe that it is God's will that they should devote themselves to replacing the present Government of Russia by a better one ?'

Soon after my visit a great affliction befell Tolstoy. His daughter Mary, who was very near and dear to him, died of pneumonia after a very short illness. I did not go to Yasnaya again till 1909, when the whole place seemed different. Instead of Mary's benign spirit one felt the very different influence of V. G. Tchertkof, who had returned from England and was relentlessly fomenting discord between Tolstoy and his wife.

In May 1907, Tolstoy's eldest daughter, Tatiana, Madame Suhotin, wrote to me : ' My father read your letter with great interest and pleasure, and told me to write to you and thank you for it. He himself latterly gets very easily tired, and therefore tries to do less mental work. During the last two months he has had two fainting fits with complete loss of memory, which in general has been getting much weaker with him.

' He says that he is glad of it, and that he only forgets all that is unnecessary but remembers what is necessary. And that is perfectly true ; in the moments after his faint, when he had quite forgotten all external affairs, he remembered that he had to be amiable to us all and not grieve us by refusing to do what we wanted him to do for his health's sake.'

During his last years Tolstoy again held classes for village children. He read and told them stories and legends and spoke of life and its duties. From these

classes, in 1908, grew his book, *The Teaching of Jesus* (Harper Bros., London and New York).

His most striking utterance that year—and his last great utterance—was the article *I Cannot Be Silent*, protesting against the hangings inflicted by the Government not merely for the suppression, but even after the suppression, of the Revolution. The article, which was written with intense feeling, produced a great sensation.

It contains an account of how men were being hanged by the dozen—with cords well-soaped 'to tighten better round their throats'—and one is made acutely conscious of the suffering Tolstoy's conscience inflicted on him for his own connection with the ruling classes, whose safety was protected by such means. Towards the end he says :

' I frankly confess it : I hope my exposure of those men will, one way or other, evoke the expulsion I desire from the set in which I am now living and in which I cannot but feel myself to be a participator in the crimes committed around me. . . . It is impossible to live so ! I, at any rate, cannot and will not live so.

' That is why I write this, and will circulate it by all means in my power, both in Russia and abroad, that one of two things may happen : either that these inhuman deeds may be stopped, or that my connection with them may be snapped and I put in prison, where I may be clearly conscious that these horrors are not committed on my behalf ; or, still better (so good that I dare not even dream of such happiness), that they may put on me, as on those twenty or twelve peasants' [whose fate he had mentioned], ' a shroud and a cap, and may push me also off a bench, so that by my own weight I may tighten the well-soaped noose round my old throat.'



The Russian newspapers that printed this protest paid the penalty in fines. In one case the editor was even arrested and his printing establishment closed.

There had been much talk of honouring Tolstoy's eightieth birthday, the 28th August 1908, but he strongly objected to anything of the kind.

The Government—always, in his case, 'willing to wound, but yet afraid to strike'—arrested some of his adherents, and threatened to suppress any demonstration, but left him alone. The Holy Synod warned the faithful against honouring the heretic, and instructed the clergy to circulate publications denouncing him. For a while it seemed as though celebrations would have to be held in the spirit of Herzen's toast to the Polish patriot-poet Mickiewicz, when he rose at a banquet and drank 'to the great name which must not be spoken,' but eventually the Government relented, and the indications shown of respect and affection for Tolstoy were so numerous and cordial as to be very impressive. Among the truest things said on that occasion was the remark, that whatever conflict there might be between Tolstoy's views and those of the political reformers, when it came to a test 'the foes of Liberty were his foes and the friends of Liberty his friends'!

My last visit to Tolstoy was in September 1909. Tchertkof was then staying near Moscow and in order to visit him Tolstoy had come to that city for the first time for more than eight years.

The exertion of travelling, the excitement caused by the crowds that assembled at the stations to see him, and the many impressions he received, were too much for his strength, and when after about a fortnight's absence he returned to Yasnaya he had two very profound fainting fits. A few days later I went to see



him, and when I inquired about his health he replied : ' Always nearer to death, and that is good. At my age one cannot jump and run, and one's memory fails ; but what of that ? Physical and mental strength decrease, but something else (moral strength) greatly increases. I would on no account exchange what I am now, for what I was sixty years ago ! '

He complained that his faculty for remembering names was failing, and that in writing he found it difficult to avoid repeating himself, as he could not remember what he had already said ; but his conversation was still pointed, animated and vigorous, and he played chess in the evening almost as well as he had done when I first played with him, fifteen years before.

He had been reading Bernard Shaw's plays, and said : ' Shaw is original, and many of his sayings are quite admirable and deserve to become quotations ; but he has the defect of *wishing* to be original and to take his readers by surprise. That is a pity. One desires to merge into the mind of an author one likes, and to do so is impossible if he is bent on saying unexpected things.' Tolstoy was much interested to hear of the plot of *Blanco Posnet* (then not yet published), which he thought very promising—and he wished to read the play, because, as he said, to many people the working of man's conscience is the only proof of the existence of a God.

On my return to England I told Shaw of this, and he sent Tolstoy the play, with a letter in which he said :

' MY DEAR COUNT TOLSTOY,—I send you herewith, through our friend Aylmer Maude, a copy of a little play called *The Showing Up of Blanco Posnet*. "Showing up" is American slang for unmasking a hypocrite. In form it is a very crude melodrama which might

be played in a mining camp to the roughest audience.

'It is, if I may say so, the sort of play that you do extraordinarily well. I remember nothing in the whole range of drama that fascinated me more than the old soldier in your *Power of Darkness*. One of the things that struck me in that play was the feeling that the preaching of the old man, right as he was, could never be of any use—that it could only anger his son and rub the last grains of self-respect out of him. But what the pious and good father could not do, the old rascal of a soldier did as if he was the voice of God. To me that scene where the two drunkards are wallowing in the straw, and the older rascal lifts the younger one above his cowardice and his selfishness, has an intensity of effect that no merely romantic scene could possibly attain; and in *Blanco Posnet* I have exploited in my own fashion this mine of dramatic material which you were the first to open up to modern playwrights.'

During our conversations, after making (as he often did) a passing reference to God's guidance, Tolstoy remarked in parenthesis: 'I speak of a *personal* God, whom I do not acknowledge, for the sake of convenience of expression.' This recalled to my mind what he had said to me twelve years before, when he remarked that: 'There are two Gods,' and went on to explain:

'There is the God people generally believe in—a God who has to *serve them* (sometimes in very refined ways, perhaps by merely giving them peace of mind). This God does not exist. But the God whom people forget—the God *whom we all have to serve*—does exist and is the prime cause of our existence and of all that we perceive.'

I was impressed by the eager interest this man of eighty-two, who was wheeled about the room in a bath-chair, took in life, and by his keen enjoyment of everything that made for the triumph of the causes he had at heart. To the utmost limit of his strength, he still worked as perseveringly as ambitious men in their prime work to make a fortune or win a position, and as ardently as young men strive to win the affection of their beloved.

On the whole however my last visit to Tolstoy left on my mind a sad impression, for there were many signs that the feud Tchertkof was carrying on against the Countess (which is referred to in the next chapter) was creating a painful situation under the strain of which her nerves were giving way.

The loss of Mary's calming influence was distinctly felt. Her younger sister, Alexandra, was under Tchertkof's sway at that time, and was evidently his active partisan against her mother.

One incident may serve as an illustration. While I was there, cinematograph operators from Pathé Frères arrived asking permission to take Tolstoy and his family in his own grounds. It transpired that Tolstoy had been cinematographed at Tchertkof's, by another firm who wanted it to be exclusive. The Countess wished Tolstoy to be taken also at Yasnaya, but Alexandra was against it. Tolstoy wavered. At first he refused, and then, when he heard that Pathé's men were going to give a free performance that evening in the open air to the villagers, he relented and promised to be taken next morning. Unfortunately, when the performance should have ended, the villagers asked for more, and the operators showed the only remaining reel they had with them: a Russian legend in which a merchant seduces a

village girl. Alexandra went at once to report to her father that the Frenchmen had shown immoral pictures, and got him to say he would not let them film him. Next morning she packed the operators off before her mother was up.

Tchertkof by his full adherence to Tolstoy's views, by the attention he devoted to the propaganda of his works, by his proclamation of 'no-copyright' principles, and by securing the alliance of the Countess Alexandra who was always near Tolstoy as his secretary, had secured so strong a position as to be able to make matters very hard for the Countess, who, worn out by the strain on her nerves, was often unwise in what she said to her husband. But though I saw this, I was not prepared for the tragic consequences that ensued, and which must be recounted in the next chapter.

Attention has already been repeatedly drawn to Tolstoy's influence in destroying the popular devotion to 'Tsar, Faith and Fatherland,' and thereby preparing the way for the Revolution. In this chapter I have referred to his outspoken condemnation of the Tsar. It remains to point out the important part Tolstoy's *longevity* played in the growth of his influence. In the early eighteen-eighties he first publicly attacked the Church; in the early 'nineties he became outspoken in his condemnation of patriotism, but not till early in the twentieth century did he bring himself scathingly to denounce the Tsar and the Tsardom. Had all his attacks on 'Tsar, Faith and Fatherland' appeared simultaneously or in quick succession they would have encountered a fiercer storm of opposition, and hardly have sunk so deeply into the public mind as was the case when they appeared gradually and challenged only one article of popular reverence at a time.

## CHAPTER XVIII

### LAST DAYS

**T**O tell the sad story of Tolstoy's last days is not an easy task, for only a few people have first-hand knowledge of the facts—and the statements they have made are not at first sight easily reconcilable. All I can do is to piece together the narrative as it presents itself to me after considering the published evidence as well as information given me privately by some of those who were at Tolstoy's death-bed.

Count Ilya Tolstoy,<sup>1</sup> in his *Reminiscences of Tolstoy* (Chapman & Hall, 1914), gives the best account of Tolstoy's end. He is convinced that if his sister Mary had then been alive, with her good influence, her understanding of her father's views, her insight into character, and the confidence every one felt in her, events would have fallen out very differently. That conviction I fully share.

Mary's place had been taken by her younger and less experienced sister, the Countess Alexandra, who was quite under the influence of V. G. Tchertkof, and who played a large part in the events which led to Tolstoy's death. She was at that time passing through the hard dogmatic phase often ex-

<sup>1</sup> Count Ilya is Tolstoy's second son, and the one most influenced by his father's views.



perienced by people influenced by Tolstoy's views, before they have fully digested them.

From about the year 1900 Tolstoy had definitely arranged with Tchertkof that the latter should have the first publication in Russian and in English of any further works Tolstoy might write, and he wrote to me, on 19th February 1901, explaining why he felt bound to support Tchertkof's undertaking. He said: 'The chief thing for me is, that after all the labour he has spent, I cannot disappoint his expectations and, instead of aiding him, hinder his work. My help in his work is limited to the fact that all my new writings (if there are any more) I issue first of all through him, letting everybody, if they care to, make use of them afterwards as they please.'

Tolstoy's perplexities as to the disposal of his literary property resulted in his very reluctantly making a will, and this apparently led to his leaving home, and to his death.

The reader knows that Tolstoy taught that there should be no such thing as property, and that rather than excite any ill-will we should allow any one to take anything we possess. He was however keenly anxious that the views expressed in his writings should be published in the way most likely to secure a wide distribution. He had received much help in his propaganda from Tchertkof, and felt himself bound in gratitude strenuously to assist that gentleman's undertakings. Tolstoy was indeed indefatigable in writing testimonials for him, and in trying to reconcile to him the many people with whom Tchertkof was in sharp conflict.

Tchertkof had set his heart on obtaining full control of Tolstoy's works, on having the first publication of them besides possessing the original manuscripts, and

editing them as he pleased. This brought him into conflict with the Countess Tolstoy, who for nearly fifty years had been closely connected with her husband's literary works, had devoted immense labour to copying them out, sorting them and publishing them, and had (as long ago as 1894) deposited a large quantity of his MSS. for safe keeping in a public museum. She has since produced evidence (including that of the custodian in the museum) to prove that these MSS. were given her by Tolstoy.

In the struggle between these two—which did not end even after Tolstoy's death—Tchertkof's success is registered by the successive stages of Tolstoy's will-making; for, strange to say, in his efforts to support Tchertkof's plans for the propaganda of the teaching that we should discard property and sacrifice everything for the sake of concord, Tolstoy ultimately consented to make a formal will, bequeathing a legal copyright in all his works.

The stages of this development may seem dry to the reader, but are necessary for an understanding of what followed. They were these. As already narrated, Tolstoy had in 1891 published a statement that he gave every one a free right to publish anything he had written since 1881, or that he might thereafter write.

Next, in his Diary, 27th March 1895, he drafted a will, or memorandum for the guidance of those who should survive him, saying: 'I request that all my papers may for revision and assortment be handed to my wife, to Tchertkof and to [N. N.] Strahov. . . . With reference to the right of publishing former works of mine' [those written before 1881, in respect of which he had allowed his wife to exercise the copyright] 'I hereby request you, my heirs, to transfer

that right to the community, i.e. to renounce your copyright in the same. But this I only request; I do not formulate it as a testamentary injunction.'

Later, in May 1904, he wrote to Tchertkof saying that, 'now when Strahov is no more and my own death cannot be very far off . . . I beg of you to undertake the labour of examining and sorting such papers as may be extant at my decease, and, in co-operation with my wife, dealing with them as you may think best.' As to these unpublished papers he adds, 'To tell you the truth, to none of these papers do I attribute the least importance, save only to the Diaries of my later years, which may be of some importance if only for the fragmentary reflections I have set forth therein.'

After Tchertkof's return from England to Russia in 1908, the antipathy he felt for the Countess Tolstoy and his extreme rudeness to her in personal intercourse made the arrangement for their dual control of the papers unworkable. Tchertkof had, moreover, persuaded Tolstoy that there was some peculiar virtue in the repudiation of copyright which he (Tchertkof) had printed on the books his firm issued, and that, if the opportunity to publish Tolstoy's posthumous works was left to him, they would appear in a way specially harmonizing with their ethical content.

For that or some other reason Tolstoy, while staying with Tchertkof, on 18th September 1909, drew up a will in which the Countess is not mentioned. In it he declares his desire that, after his death, all he had written subsequent to 1st January 1881 should be no person's private property but should be freely publishable and republishable by all who desire to do so, and that all his manuscripts should be handed to V. G. Tchertkof to deal with, but should be held by him

freely accessible to all who may desire to make use of them for publication.

A will of that kind had no legal validity, and though that would not matter from the Tolstoyan point of view, which repudiates property, it mattered from the point of view of Tchertkof, who wished to have possession of the documents, and to publish the posthumous works while every one else was helpless.

The next stage is recorded in an article by F. A. Strahov (a relation of N. N. Strahov) published in the *St. Petersburg Gazette*, 6th November 1911. An editorial note prefacing this article comments on the 'profound mystery enveloping the preparation of the will, its composition, and finally the signing of the document. Tolstoy considered it necessary to hide the truth even from his wife. In this way he was involved in sharp contradiction with himself, for the concealment of the truth could not possibly harmonize with his fundamental views. Who knows whether the heavy burden of keeping this secret from his wife did not become too unendurable for him, and whether this is not the explanation of his sudden departure from Yasnaya?'

F. A. Strahov, it appears from this article, was sent by Tchertkof to Yasnaya to try to secure Tolstoy's approval to a new will drafted by Tchertkof. Strahov says, the business was 'explained to me at a preliminary consultation with Tchertkof and the juriconsult N. K. Muravev.' Tchertkof had decided that the above-mentioned will of 18th September 1909 was unsatisfactory and that it would be better for Tolstoy to leave his copyrights and the originals of his works to some definite person.

The two people who had had most to do with the publication of Tolstoy's works had been the Countess



and Tchertkof, and to set the former aside and give full authority to the latter needed not an informal will (such as that of 18th September 1909), but one establishing absolute copyright by formal legal guarantees.

But Tchertkof had so definitely and publicly committed himself to the no-copyright principle, and it would have been so invidious for him to oust the whole of Tolstoy's family, that to quote his own words (Appendix II, pp. 228-9, *The Diaries of Leo Tolstoy. Youth.* Dent & Sons, London, 1917): 'There was made, at my request, an alteration, in that . . . I had no desire to assume the position of the juridical heir. Hence I begged him [Tolstoy] to choose for the purpose such members of his family as he could best trust in the matter. Therefore Tolstoy named as his official heir his youngest daughter, the Countess Alexandra Lvovna Tolstoy. . . . All three of us looked upon the arrangement as destined to confine the Countess Alexandra's task to that of securing to me unhindered disposal of Tolstoy's literary legacy.'

In Strahov's account of his visit to Yasnaya he says that the presence of the Countess Tolstoy at Yasnaya was 'extremely undesirable for the business on which I was going,' and he supposed her 'still to be in Moscow where I had met her.' However, to his dismay he encountered her at the station at Yasnaya, she having come from Moscow by the same train as himself. He nevertheless walked to the house and managed to find his way to Tolstoy's room without again meeting her. 'In a few words I explained to Tolstoy the necessity of composing a formal will leaving the copyright to a specific person, and I placed before him the draft will' [the draft drawn up by Tchertkof and his



legal adviser], 'asking him to read it and sign it if he agreed to its contents. Tolstoy at once began to read the draft . . . and, having read it all, immediately wrote at the end that he agreed to its provisions, but then, having considered a little, he added, "This whole affair oppresses me! And there is no need to safeguard the dissemination of one's thoughts by means of various legalities."

'Having said this Tolstoy left the room, and I remained alone, doubtful whether to reply to his declaration or to leave Yasnaya without having accomplished anything.'

When Tolstoy returned, Strahov, feeling bound to try to fulfil the mission on which he had been sent, said to him: 'I understand and appreciate the moral height from which you judge this affair, but the conditions of to-day are such that if you do nothing to ensure the public utilization of your writings, you thereby indirectly aid the establishment of property rights therein by your family. But if you arrange to leave them to an heir (be it even as private property, only to some one to whom your publicly expressed wishes will be sacred) you will secure their public utilization.' He then continued [and though the voice was the voice of Strahov the arguments were the arguments of Tchertkof, who knew to a nicety how to touch the tender spots of Tolstoy's conscience]: 'I do not conceal from you how painful it is for us, your friends, when we hear reproaches aimed at you to the effect that, despite your condemnation of landed property, you nevertheless transferred your estates to your wife and your children. Equally painful will it be to hear it said that, although you certainly knew that your declaration of 1891 had no legal validity, you did nothing to secure the carrying out of your wishes, and thereby

again consciously assisted the passing on of your copy-rights to your family. I cannot express how painful it will be to your friends, Leo Nikolayevich, to hear that said after your death, and during the triumphant monopolization of your writings by your heirs for fifty years. . . .’

I regard that speech as a diplomatic masterpiece! No appeal to Tolstoy to make a will for any one’s interest would have had any success, but by presenting the making of a will as a *sacrifice* on behalf of the movement, and of the friends who were carrying it on, success was scored.

‘That is a weighty argument,’ replied Tolstoy, and he promised to give a decision after he had been for a ride.

Later on they had dinner, Tolstoy ‘as usual sitting at the right hand of the Countess, who evidently was free from any suspicion of how important an event was then taking place in her house.’

‘As soon as dinner was over and the Countess had left the room, Tolstoy went to his study and took Alexandra Lvovna (his daughter) and me with him.’

“‘I shall surprise you by my radical decision,” said he to us with a kindly smile. “I wish to be *plus royaliste que le roi*. I wish, Sasha (Alexandra), to leave *all* to you *alone*. . . .”’

“‘I think it will be best if I leave *all* to you *alone*,” continued Tolstoy, “and that will be quite natural, as you, the last of all my children to be living with me, sympathize with me and are helping me so much in all my affairs. . . .”’

We know from Tchertkof’s statement quoted above that *he* had asked Tolstoy to make an arrangement of this kind, and the Countess Alexandra was the person whose nomination suited him best.

“ But, Leo Nikolayevich, what is your wish with reference to all those writings the income for which has hitherto been enjoyed by Sophia Andreyevna and which she is accustomed to consider as your gift to her, and therefore as her own property ? ” I interposed, amazed at Tolstoy’s decision.

“ About all that I can give private instructions to Sasha, and she will see that my wishes are carried out, but in the will let it stand ‘ all ’ to ‘ her alone, ’ ” said Tolstoy. “ As to my unpublished works: *Hadji Murad*, etc. I should like the first receipts from them to be used to redeem the land for the Yasnaya Polyana peasants. That is a thing I have long desired. . . . But all those details and minor points I will consider with Tchertkof.”

‘ At evening tea [while Tolstoy was out of the room] Sophia Andreyevna asked me why I had come ? As besides the chief affair I had another errand, namely, to submit a draft of alterations Tchertkof had made in Tolstoy’s last article, *It is Time to Understand*, I was able with a light heart to inform her of that, naturally remaining silent about my principal mission.

‘ An hour later I started for the train to Moscow, first informing Tchertkof by telegraph of the result of my conversation with Tolstoy.’

‘ The object of my second journey to Yasnaya Polyana was to take to Tolstoy for signature, or better still for him to copy out in his own hand, the wording of the will which had been prepared by the lawyer Muravev.’

Strahov goes on to explain his anxiety lest Tolstoy should decline to copy out the will, and as to how the necessary witnesses could be smuggled into the house. He was accompanied by A. B. Goldenweiser, the pianist. The latter, ‘ who had previously been initiated

into the affair and had expressed his readiness to cooperate, took the document I had prepared, listened to all necessary instructions from Tchertkof, and entered the train with me.

'At Telyatina [Tchertkof's estate near Yasnaya] I did not find Tchertkof's steward, P. S. Anurin, who had been selected by Tchertkof to serve as a witness; he had started early that morning to fetch another witness, M. V. Buligin.'<sup>1</sup>

Strahov mentions that when driving to the Tolstoys' he felt 'some gnawings of conscience' at having to hide himself from Countess Sophia Andreyevna. He achieved his purpose, however, and while he was witnessing the will (which Tolstoy copied out), the latter 'shut both doors of his study, one after the other. I confess it felt strange and unusual to see him in the rôle of one taking precautions against unwelcome visitors. I cannot express what a relief I felt when the precious document, quite complete, was rolled up by Goldenweiser, and we both left the study.'

Tchertkof's sister-in-law, 'who was also initiated into the affair,' happened to be at Yasnaya, and 'was the first person to hear an account of the successful accomplishment of my mission.'

Strahov then tells how, having left the house for a few hours, he returned 'now simply in the character of an ordinary guest and, as if nothing had happened, dined there, watched Tolstoy playing chess with Goldenweiser and Buligin, and about eleven o'clock, after evening tea, left the house.'

'Bidding farewell to Sophia Andreyevna, I looked attentively at her face. Complete tranquillity and cordiality towards the departing guests was so clearly expressed on it that I had no doubt of her entire

<sup>1</sup> Buligin, on hearing what was on hand, declined to act.



lack of suspicion. I drove off with the pleasant consciousness of a carefully accomplished task, destined to have historic consequences. Only a small worm burrowed within me. It was the gnawing of conscience, causing me some disquietude as to the conspiratorial character of our conduct.'

This will, after all, did not give full satisfaction, and yet another was prepared to meet the eventuality of Alexandra dying before her father. This last will Tolstoy copied out in the forest near Tchertkof's house, sitting on the stump of a tree.

It was dated 22nd July 1910, and said that 'anything without exception that I may have written to the day of my death . . . together with the right of literary property in all my productions and the manuscripts themselves . . . I do bequeath . . . into the full possession of my daughter Alexandra Lvovna Tolstoy, or, if the said daughter Alexandra should predecease me, into the full possession of my daughter Tatiana Lvovna Suhotin.'

Even this had to be supplemented, and Tchertkof drew up an 'Explanatory Note,' which Tolstoy signed on 31st July 1910, stating that :

'In as much as Leo Nikolayevich Tolstoy has indited a testament whereby he bequeaths the whole of his writings to his daughter Alexandra Lvovna Tolstoy, it is necessary to state . . . his wishes . . . as follows: (1) That his writings shall . . . remain publishable and republishable by all who may desire to use them; (2) That all papers extant at the time of his death shall be handed to V. G. Tchertkof . . . that he may examine such documents and publish what he may consider suitable. In regard to the material aspect, Leo Nikolayevich requests the said V. G. Tchertkof to transact all business in connection with



the same on the principles on which he has published writings of Leo Nikolayevich during the lifetime of the latter.'

Tchertkof explains that this means that 'I should apply them to objects with which he [Tolstoy] was in sympathy'—a sufficiently elastic condition.

In the edition of the *Diary* already referred to, Tchertkof explains, in the rather pompous style to which he is prone, that, 'Naturally, recourse to the external formulary of an official testament was distasteful to Tolstoy—yet he feared lest, by making pedantic display of aversion to that formulary, he should run the risk of having his writings prevented from becoming public property,' and he sets forth the arguments which, he says, 'finally decided Tolstoy—to whom, for all his radical views, pedantry was in no way natural—to indite such a will as should satisfy every external requirement of officialdom.'

All this, and the fact that *The Diaries of Leo Tolstoy* are now published under V. G. Tchertkof's auspices, with 'all rights reserved' (Dent & Co., 1917), must seem rather strange to those whom V. G. Tchertkof persuaded (during the twelve years before Tolstoy's death) to attach importance to his proclamation of the 'principle' of No-Copyright. But if there were nothing more to reproach V. G. Tchertkof with, the subject would hardly be worth pursuing. There is, however, a much more serious indictment to follow later.

Tolstoy really had too long delayed taking definite action as to the ownership of his copyrights. The policy of ignoring this valuable property, while allowing Tchertkof to have the first publication (which, in practice, meant having the command of the market), could not continue after Tolstoy's death, unless he bequeathed the rights in a legal manner.

Both his wife and Tchertkof expected to control his works after his death. If he did nothing, the rights would go to his wife and to his children, but he was (rightly or wrongly) persuaded that Tchertkof could and would publish them in some manner more consonant with the 'principles' of his teaching.

Ilya Tolstoy in his *Reminiscences*, without mentioning Tchertkof by name, tells a story of the latter's relations with Leo Tolstoy. In his last years Tolstoy devoted much time and care to preparing a compilation of passages in harmony with his own outlook on life, selected from the works of various writers. Of this, Ilya says: 'When my Father made up his mind to compile the collection of the sayings of the wise, to which he gave the name *A Circle of Reading*, he told one of his friends about it. A few days afterwards this "friend" came to see him again, and at once told him that he and his wife had been thinking over his scheme for the new book and had come to the conclusion that he ought to call it *For Every Day*, instead of *A Circle of Reading*. To this my Father replied that he preferred the title *A Circle of Reading*, because the word "Circle" suggested the idea of continuous reading, which was what he meant to express by the title. Half an hour later the "friend" came across the room to him and repeated exactly the same remark again. This time my Father made no reply. In the evening, when the "friend" was preparing to go home, as he was saying good-bye to my Father, he held his hand in his and began once more: "Still I must tell you, Leo Nikolayevich, that I and my wife have been thinking it over, and we have come to the conclusion," and so on, word for word, the same.

'"No, no. I want to die, to die as soon as possible," groaned my Father, when he had seen his "friend" off.

“ Isn't it all the same, whether it's *A Circle of Reading* or *For Every Day*? No, it's time for me to die ; I cannot live like this any longer.”

‘ But after all, in the end, one of the editions of the sayings of the wise was called *For Every Day* instead of *A Circle of Reading*.

“ Ah, my dear, ever since this — turned up, I really don't know which of Leo Nikolayevich's writings are by Leo Nikolayevich, and which are by — ! ” murmured our old friend, the sincere and far from malicious Maria Alexandrovna Schmidt.

‘ This sort of intrusion into my Father's work as an author bore, in his “ friend's ” language, the modest title of “ anticipatory corrections,” and there is no doubt that M. A. Schmidt was right ; for no one will ever know where what my Father wrote ends and where his concessions to his “ friend's ” persistent “ anticipatory corrections ” begin.’

Ilya Tolstoy also tells us : ‘ During the last years of his life my Father's health perceptibly grew worse. Several times he had the most sudden and inexplicable sort of fainting fits ; he used to recover from them the next day, but always lost his memory for the time.

‘ Seeing my brother's children, who were staying at Yasnaya, in the living-room one day, he asked with some surprise :

“ Whose children are these ? ” Meeting my wife he said : “ Don't be offended, my dear. I know that I am very fond of you, but I have quite forgotten who you are.” And when he went up to the living-room after one of these fainting fits, he looked round with an astonished air and said, “ Where's my brother Mitenka ? ” a brother who had died fifty years before. The day following, all traces of the attack would have disappeared.’

Of the reasons that induced Tolstoy at the very end of his life to leave home, after having always decided that it would be wrong to do so, Ilya says: 'From the moment of my Father's death I have been racking my brain to discover what could have given him the impulse to take that last step. What power could compel him to yield in the struggle in which he had held out so firmly and tenaciously for so many years? What was the last drop, the last grain of sand that turned the scales and sent him forth to search for a new life on the very edge of the grave?

'Could my Father really have fled from home because the wife with whom he had lived for forty-eight years had developed neurasthenia and at one time showed certain abnormalities characteristic of that malady? Was that like the man who loved his fellow-men and knew the human heart so well? Or did he suddenly desire, when he was eighty-three and weak and helpless, to realize the ideal of a pilgrim's life? If so, why did he take my sister Sasha and Dr. Makovitsky with him? He could not but know that in their company he would be just as well provided with all the necessaries of life as he would have been at Yasnaya Polyana.

'Knowing my Father as I did, I felt that the question of his flight was not so simple as it seemed to others, and the problem lay long unsolved before me, until it was suddenly made clear by the will that he left behind him.

'"All this business is very disagreeable to me, and it is quite unnecessary," my Father said when he signed the paper that was thrust before him. That was his real opinion about his will, and it never altered to the end of his days. Is there any need for proof of that? I think one need know very little of his

convictions to be sure of it. Was Leo Nikolayevich Tolstoy likely of his own accord to have recourse to the protection of the law? And, if he did, was he likely to conceal it from his wife and children?

' If even an outsider like Mr. Strahov felt some "twinges" and "qualms of conscience" over the "conspiratorial" character of the transaction, what must my Father himself have felt? He was thrust into a position from which there was absolutely no way out. To tell his wife was out of the question; it would have grievously offended his "friends." To have destroyed the will would have been worse still; for his "friends" had suffered for his principles, morally and . . . materially, and had been exiled from Russia, and he felt himself bound to them. And on the top of all this were his fainting fits, his increasing loss of memory, the clear consciousness of the approach of death, and the continually growing nervousness of his wife, who felt in her heart of hearts the unnatural estrangement of her husband and could not understand it.

' And if she asked him what it was that he was concealing from her, he would either have to say nothing, or to tell her the truth. But that was impossible.

' What was he to do?

' And so it came about that the long-cherished dream of leaving Yasnaya Polyana presented itself as the only means of escape. It was certainly not in order to enjoy the full realization of his dream that he left his home; he went away as a choice of evils. "I am too feeble and too old to begin a new life," he had said to my brother Sergey only a few days before his departure. Harassed, ill in body and in mind, he started forth without any object in view, without any



thought-out plan, merely to hide himself somewhere, wherever it might be, and get some rest from the moral tortures which had become insupportable to him.'

The above quotation from Ilya Tolstoy's *Reminiscences* gives the clue to what I have now to narrate.

During the summer of 1910 the Countess Tolstoy suffered from a nervous breakdown. The long-drawn struggle with Tchertkof told terribly upon her. The spirit of strife which has followed him through life like a shadow, manifested itself at Yasnaya when he settled in the neighbourhood, and the Countess was his chief victim.

Soon after he had secured Tolstoy's signature to the final will and to the 'Explanatory Note' which secured his triumph, rumours of the matter began to reach the Countess, and the fact that she did not know what was really happening so told upon her in her nervous condition that she was almost driven to suicide.

Tolstoy's own health became more and more feeble. When Ilya Tolstoy visited Yasnaya that last autumn he tells us: 'I was particularly struck by his [Tolstoy's] feebleness this time. And not so much by his physical feebleness as by a certain air of self-concentration and abstraction from the outer world.

'I retain a very sad remembrance of this interview. . . . I was very much struck by the decay in his memory. Although I had been working for five years in the Peasants' Bank and he knew that perfectly well, he completely forgot all about it on this visit, and asked me where I was working and what I was doing. He was very absent-minded in every respect and, as it were, cut off from the rest of the world.

‘ It is curious that the sudden decay of my Father’s memory displayed itself only in the matter of real facts and people. He was entirely unaffected in his literary work, and everything that he wrote, down to the last days of his life, is characteristically logical and forcible ! ’

On 28th October 1910 Tolstoy finally left home. He is reported to have said that the incident prompting him to do so was that, after going to bed the previous evening, he heard his wife searching among the papers in his study. The Countess denies having done so, and explains that after her husband had made his will he often fancied that she was looking for it. Tolstoy had long trained himself to be extraordinarily patient with her in their personal intercourse when she was irritable or sarcastic ; but, nevertheless, the clash of wills between them produced a tension which had now reached breaking point, and her presence in his study, which in other circumstances would hardly have disturbed him, was sufficient to bring about the catastrophe.

When she had retired, he rose, collected some manuscripts, took two changes of underclothing, and told his friend and follower Dr. Makovitsky that he had decided to leave home at once.

About five in the morning he left the house, went to the stables, roused the coachmen and told them to harness. His daughter, Alexandra, and Makovitsky brought his portmanteau and other things into the stable-yard ; and without returning to the house he set out with Makovitsky.

He decided, first of all, to visit his sister Mary at the Shamardino Convent.

About noon the travellers had to change into a train with only one passenger carriage—a crowded, smoky

and over-heated third-class. Though it rained and the wind was sharp, Tolstoy long stood on the open platform at the end of the carriage, and there probably caught cold.

It was almost night before they reached the station, twelve miles from the Convent. As it was late, he passed that night at the Monastery Hotel, which was nearer.

He spent the next day, Saturday, with his sister, who has given the following account of the visit in a letter to the Countess Tolstoy :

‘ DEAREST SONYA,— . . . When Lyovochka arrived here he was terribly downcast at first, and when he told me that you had thrown yourself into the pond he wept outright, and I could not look at him without tears in my eyes. . . . He only said that he had come for a long time, and meant to take a peasant’s cottage and live here. It seems to me that . . . he merely wished to settle down in accordance with his own tastes and to live in solitude where nobody would interfere with him ; that is what I gathered from his words. Until Sasha’s’ [the Countess Alexandra’s] ‘ arrival he had no intention of going away, but was preparing to visit the Opta Hermitage. But Sasha turned everything upside down by her arrival next day. When he went off that evening to sleep at the hotel he had not the slightest intention of going away, but said to me : “ *Au revoir*, I shall see you to-morrow.” Imagine my astonishment and despair when I was awakened at five o’clock the next morning—it was still dark—and told that he was leaving. I got up at once, ordered the carriage and drove to the hotel ; but he had already gone, and I saw no more of him.’

Subsequently, telling the story of his visit, his sister said to her nephew: 'He sat in that very arm-chair where you are sitting now: and how he cried! When Sasha arrived with her girl-friend they set to work studying the map of Russia and planning out a route to the Caucasus. Lyovochka sat there thoughtful and melancholy.

'"Never mind, Papa; it'll be all right!" said Sasha, trying to encourage him.

'"Ah, you women, you women!" answered her Father, bitterly. "How can it ever be all right?"

'I so much hoped that he would settle down here; it would just have suited him; he was even taking a cottage in the village.'

The reason his daughter hurried the sick man away was for fear lest her mother should find him.

That night Tolstoy felt ill, but he rose at five a.m. and agreed to proceed at once to Rostov-on-Don, where he was to procure a passport to leave Russia. About midday he was taken quite ill in the train; and Dr. Makovitsky decided that it was necessary to break the journey at the first available station, which happened to be Astapovo. Supported by his daughter and Makovitsky, he descended from the train with difficulty. His temperature had risen nearly to 104. He coughed, had a cold in his head, and a very irregular pulse. The stationmaster, hearing who he was, willingly placed his house at Tolstoy's disposal. Tolstoy himself took the disappointment good-humouredly, and remarked half-jokingly, 'Well, it's checkmate . . . don't be vexed!'

The next morning, Monday, Tchertkof was telegraphed for. That day Tolstoy dictated some thoughts, entered up his Diary, was read to, and even managed to write an account of his flight from Yasnaya Polyana.

He supposed that no one but Tchertkof knew of his whereabouts; but a newspaper correspondent had tracked him to the Convent, and detectives had followed him thence. Tchertkof would not let the Countess know where her dying husband was, but she received the news by telegram from a newspaper office, and at once set off by special train to Astapovo with her children. Her eldest son Sergey had arrived there before her, but so also had Tchertkof. He, a young man in his employ, Alexandra, a girl-friend of hers, and Dr. Makovitsky were in possession of the house and of the patient, and they kept the Countess Sophia Andreyevna out and Tolstoy in ignorance of her arrival.

Dr. Nikitin, who had been telegraphed for, after examining the patient, diagnosed inflammation of the left lung. That attack did not appear to be a very serious one, and what Tolstoy really died of seems to have been nervous exhaustion. The long struggle to apply his principles to his life, and the resulting conflict with those around him, had worn him out and left him unable to withstand an attack from which he might have recovered had he been in good condition.

During the night following Tuesday, 2nd November, he slept badly, groaning and suffering from heartburn. At this stage of his illness he began intermittently to show signs of childishness. For instance, having seen some one wiping the floor near him, he began to be fidgety to have it wiped whenever he noticed the slightest thing on it.

The next day, Wednesday, he was particularly animated, seemed pleased that his fever had abated, and, though on good terms personally with his doctors, emphatically expressed his customary disapproval of their profession.



He began dictating a letter to me in English (though he nearly always wrote to me in Russian) but got no further than the words: 'On my way to the place where I wished to be alone, I was . . .' Interrupted at that point, the letter was never completed. It was the last but one he ever attempted to dictate.

At about five p.m. he called in Tchertkof and Dr. Nikitin, and (according to a statement made by the former) spoke of his uneasiness lest his wife should hear of his illness and come to Astapovo.

He added: 'You understand that if she comes here I shall not be able to refuse her . . .' and he began to cry.

He was by this time so enfeebled that he had to be carefully supported when he had occasion to get out of bed. Once, after being helped in this way by three people, he remarked in a weak, sorrowful voice, as he lay on his back breathing rapidly after his exertion: 'The peasants . . . the peasants, how they die!' And again his eyes filled with tears. To the very end he never lost his sense of the injustice of social arrangements which enable some people to have a superfluity while others lack necessities.

Later he remarked: 'Evidently I shall have to die in my sins!' to which Tchertkof replied: 'This is not sin, but love that now surrounds you. You have done all you could to escape from sin!'

Tolstoy then asked to have some letters read him that had been forwarded. The first was from a peasant, M. P. Novikov, with whom Tolstoy, when planning to leave Yasnaya, had thought of staying. Novikov wrote that Tolstoy's life was dear to him and that he wished it to last as long as possible. 'But,' he continued, 'that can only be among the accustomed

conditions in which you have lived for eighty-two years.' He went on to say that for a visit of a day, a week, or a month, 'my cottage is very convenient. It has a light room, which all my family would gladly give up to you, and they would also lovingly serve you.'

Tolstoy said that Novikov should be thanked and told that he had now gone in quite another direction.

That Wednesday Tolstoy wrote in his Diary for the last time. His last words in it are :

'I see our plans have failed. . . . *Fais ce que dois, adv . . .*' [The commencement of a French motto: 'Do what's right, come what may!'] 'It is all for the good of others, and chiefly of myself.'

That night he slept badly, moaned and was delirious. The action of his heart was weak and irregular, and his pulse reached 120-130 a minute.

On the Thursday he looked very ill. At times he said: 'It is very hard, very oppressive,' and seemed to be trying to discern the will of his Master and conscientiously to fulfil it. On the morning of that day he said to Tchertkof: 'It seems I am dying . . . but perhaps not! I must *strive* a little longer,' and his eyes grew moist. He who had so long and so arduously endeavoured to do his duty, did not relax his efforts, but maintained the struggle to the end; not, however, without a certain perplexity, at times, as to what his duty was.

He still wished to be read to, and to dictate his thoughts; but frequently lapsed into delirium, and occasionally showed the unreasonable irritability of a sick man.

During the Thursday night he hardly slept at all, was excited and constantly delirious. He tossed

about in bed, and was incoherent. His breathing became laboured and his pulse weak.

During the last days the doctors administered injections of camphor, digitaline, codeine and morphia. Tolstoy was too ill to object, but he had previously expressed his disapproval of such treatment.

Expressions he let drop from time to time indicated that he had no fear of death, which he knew might be at hand, and that he generally felt reconciled even to suffering and sickness.

'Ah, well! . . . This also is good.'—'All is simple and good.'—'It is good . . . yes, yes!' Such were some of his exclamations.

His eldest son Sergej and his eldest daughter Tatiana (Mme Suhotin) came every day to attend him. Some of his conversations with his daughter were very touching, not merely from the deep affection the two felt for one another, but also because of his real concern for his wife, whom he still supposed to be at Yasnaya, ill and in ignorance of his whereabouts. Mme Suhotin found herself in a difficult position. She did not wish to deceive her father but dared not inform him that her mother was waiting outside, longing to be admitted,—for fear of a conflict with Tchertkof, which might have endangered her father's life.

When his questions became too direct to be evaded, she therefore told him it was best not to speak about the matter just then, but that when he was stronger she would tell him everything. Tolstoy, not understanding the cause of this reserve, replied: 'But you must understand how *necessary* for my soul it is to know this!' and tears came into his eyes. Thereupon Mme Suhotin bade him a hurried good-bye and left the room.

Tolstoy's thoughts dwelt much on his wife, especially on the Friday, and he expressed regret and anxiety lest people might think badly of her. 'I think we have not acted considerately,' said he, and then grew drowsy and again became incoherent.<sup>1</sup>

Just then a telegram arrived from the Metropolitan Antonius of Petersburg, urging Tolstoy to return to the bosom of the Church. He was so weak that it was decided not to show him the message; especially as, during his previous serious illness in the Crimea in 1902, the same bishop had sent him a similar message, in reply to which Tolstoy had said to his son:

'Sergey, tell these gentlemen that they should leave me in peace. . . . How is it they do not understand that, even when one is face to face with death, two and two still make four!'

The first half of Friday night Tolstoy slept fairly well; but later on he became very restless, moaning and being much troubled with hiccoughs and heart-burn.

On Saturday, about two p.m. he sat up in bed and exclaimed in a loud voice: 'This is the end. . . . I give you only this advice . . . besides Leo Tolstoy, there are many other people in the world, and you

<sup>1</sup> Tolstoy would have been much more distressed had he foreseen what was to happen; but he could not suspect his friend of so utterly disregarding his wishes as to make the publication of his works a vehicle for circulating bitter attacks on the wife Tolstoy loved despite all differences. This however V. G. Tchertkof has not scrupled to do, both in Russia and abroad. In an Appendix to a volume of Tolstoy's *Diaries*, issued in London and New York in 1917, V. G. Tchertkof accuses the Countess of having 'abstracted' certain documents, and insinuates that, to cover her action, 'a mendacious assertion has been set on foot that certain originals had presumably been given by Tolstoy to his wife.'

The case of the Tolstoy family against V. G. Tchertkof was set out in the *Russian Review* for May 1913. A reply on Tchertkof's behalf subsequently appeared in the same Review. With much show of moral indignation, it refuted one charge, but left three serious charges unnoticed.

attend only to this Leo . . . !' A failure of the heart followed. Artificial breathing was resorted to. Camphor and caffeine were injected. Towards evening he again seemed better, and took a little milk and gruel.

His consciousness that death was drawing near showed itself in disjointed exclamations such as: 'It's time to knock off . . . all is over!'—'Here is the end, and it doesn't matter!' For the most part his mind was now clear, and his manner towards those about him kindly.

Towards midnight on Saturday he was worse, and in his delirium he repeatedly exclaimed: 'To escape . . . to escape!' A large injection of morphia was administered, and his pulse grew weaker and weaker. At four a.m., when he was already unconscious, his wife—who had long been waiting anxiously close at hand—was at last admitted to his death-bed. Controlling her agitation, she entered quietly, but fell on her knees to kiss his hand. He however never regained consciousness.

Artificial respiration was then again resorted to, and for some time he continued to breathe quietly, but presently a whistling sound made itself heard. His family and friends assembled round the death-bed. 'The last breaths!' said the doctor, who stood near the head of the bed; and at seven minutes past six on the morning of Sunday, 7th November 1910 (20th November, new style), this great man died calmly and painlessly.

During the week of his illness at Astapovo, that little country station had been thronged by representatives of the Government, including the Governor of the Province and a special official sent by the Prime Minister, gendarme officers, important railway officials,



swarms of press men, photographers, cinematographers and many others.

When he had broken away from the dearly loved place of his birth to live a life of seclusion, a tragic fate decreed that Tolstoy was to give more trouble, and be the occasion of more labour to his fellow-men, than at any previous moment of his life. Besides his family and friends, five doctors were in attendance on him ; the stationmaster had been turned out of his house ; many people were living in railway carriages side-tracked for their accommodation at that small wayside station ; the local telegraphic arrangements had broken down almost completely under the enormous pressure of work put upon them ; while the telegraph wires and cables of the world were busy with messages concerning the man who lay dying amid such circumstances, and many thousands of columns about him were being written, set in type, printed and circulated. Surely, never before did the death-bed of a recluse receive such publicity !

The cordiality of the sympathy manifested when the news of his illness and death became public proved that, despite all mistakes, his endeavour to find a way of making human relations truly humane had endeared him to the mass of his fellow-countrymen and to multitudes of others the world over.

The Tsar, the Duma and the Council of State were at one in expressing sorrow at the loss of Russia's great writer. All the leading newspapers appeared with black borders. Theatres were closed. Petersburg University suspended lectures on the day its Honorary Member, Leo Tolstoy, was buried ; and educational establishments throughout the land did all they were allowed to do to honour his memory.

The day after his death, the train bearing his corpse

home to Yasnaya made its way very slowly from Astapovo, for at every station on the way multitudes had assembled to pay their last respects. It only arrived at the station for Yasnaya about eight o'clock on Tuesday morning.

The coffin was carried from thence by Tolstoy's sons and by peasants to the house that had been his. The procession was almost a mile long, and included two choirs of students who sang the chorale 'Eternal Memory.' There was no Church service nor any speeches, but there were many sobs at his funeral.

The spot chosen for his grave was, as he had desired, the one where he and his brothers had played, and where Nicholas was supposed to have buried the wonderful green stick on which was written the secret it was the great purpose of Leo Tolstoy's life to discover and reveal.

In his old age his mind used to turn back to the days when Nicholas first told him of the secret showing how all men might cease to suffer, quarrel or be angry, and might become permanently happy in a loving brotherhood. The lapse of three-quarters of a century had not impaired his trust that a message exists which can destroy all evil in men and give them universal welfare; and when his journey drew near its end he asked—'since my body must be buried somewhere'—to be buried at the spot made sacred by that first consciousness of a passion for goodness, which ultimately knit his soul to that of his fellow-men to the uttermost ends of the earth.

He who seeks that message need not succeed fully in his quest in order to win men's hearts. He may even seem to fail, and yet his example may do more to make life worth living than the most brilliant material success could accomplish.

Tolstoy never read the whole of that magic message,—no one has yet read more than part of it. But the fact that he fervently sought it supplies the key to all his writings from *Boyhood* to *I Cannot Be Silent*; and we may be sure that the author of *What Men Live By* knew at least much of the great secret.

The love and gratitude that followed him were abundantly earned; for if he was dogmatic—and the letter killeth—he was also inspired, and the spirit giveth life!

His art kindled in the souls of others the flame that burnt in his own, and—to quote from his own *What is Art?*—enabled countless numbers to feel ‘the mysterious gladness of a communion which, reaching beyond the grave, unites us with all men of the past who have been moved by the same feelings, and with all men of the future who will yet be touched by them.’

His achievement, as he was very ready to admit, fell far short of his aim; but, apart from his strenuous efforts to conform his own life and conduct to the principles he believed in, how great was his performance! Of modern men who have stimulated the minds and conscience of their fellows—and whose words influence us to feel that we must trust to no self-acting evolution, but must be up and doing to bring in the millennium ourselves—Tolstoy is so much the first, that one forgets to ask who is second.

The great yet simple message nearest to his heart was that ‘The most important thing in life is for man to unite with man; and the worst thing in life is to go apart from one another.’

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